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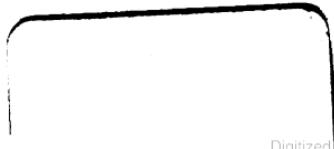
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Xmas 1919

Love & Greetings  
Jean



THE HISTORY  
*of*  
The 89th Brigade

1914 - 1918

*By*  
BRIG.-GEN. F. C. STANLEY

LIVERPOOL  
“DAILY POST” PRINTERS  
1919

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

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EARL OF DERBY.

MAJOR-GEN. W. FRY.

BRIG.-GEN. F. C. STANLEY.

MAJOR-GEN. J. SHEA.

LT.-COL. H. S. POYNTZ.

LT.-COL. E. H. TROTTER.

COL. E. F. GOSSET.

17TH BATTALION K.L.R. MARCH THROUGH LIVERPOOL.

LT.-COL. B. FAIRFAX.

LT.-COL. H. COBHAM.

CHURCH PARADE, HOOTON PARK, OCTOBER 4TH, 1914.

LT.-COL. G. ROLLO.

CAPT. E. SEYMOUR.

"THE OPTIMISTS."

BARRACK ROOM, PRESCOT.

DINING HALL, PRESCOT.

PRESENTATION OF BADGES BY LORD DERBY.

GROUP OF OFFICERS, 17TH, 18TH, 19TH AND 20TH K.L.R.  
(89TH BRIGADE). Taken Knowsley Park, March, 1915.

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DIED FEBRUARY 4 1948



EARL OF DERBY.



## *FOREWORD.*

---

*Derby House,*

*Stratford Place, W.*

*23rd September, 1919.*

*I can claim but little credit for the formation of the 89th Brigade. The desire to serve their country in an hour of need was a predominant feeling amongst Liverpool men, and when I proposed the formation of what came to be known as the Pals' Brigade, I merely voiced the wish expressed to me by many would-be recruits that they should be allowed to serve with their friends. The appeal was, therefore, likely to be a great success before it was even made.*

*I shall never forget the scene in St. George's Hall, when men came forward, not singly, but literally in hundreds, and we were able, in the space of a very few hours, to complete those battalions, which were afterwards reinforced by others, to make the Brigade.*

*I was, unfortunately, taken ill soon after the formation of the first three battalions, and when I was again able to be about, what I had seen as raw recruits were already well disciplined and well trained men, eager to take their part in the great struggle.*

*Readers of the book will follow the fortunes of the 89th Brigade in the War, but to me the proudest moment*

*in my life was when I received a telegram from Sir Henry Rawlinson, despatched in the middle of the battle of the Somme, telling me how splendidly the Brigade had behaved.*

*Liverpool and district, from which this splendid Brigade was recruited, has every reason to feel proud of them, and I, for my part, shall always feel that one of the greatest honours that has ever been done me was to be associated, in however humble a degree, with men who upheld so splendidly the honour of their Country.*

*In conclusion, may I express a sincere hope that the friendship and comradeship begun in time of War may be continued in time of Peace.*

**DERBY.**

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## CHAPTER I.

---

### THE COMMENCEMENT—LORD DERBY'S PROPOSAL. THE PRELIMINARY MEETING. THE FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT DAYS OF RECRUITING.

It was somewhere about the 24th August, 1914, that the idea of the City Battalions was first mentioned to me by Lord Derby.

Recruiting throughout the country had rather hung fire for several reasons, perhaps one of them being that people had not realised the importance and the strain that was to be put on the man power of this country ; and another being that men who were anxious to serve their country were somewhat nervous as to their associations in the new venture. Stories had got about as to the mode of living of those who had enlisted, which had had a somewhat deterring effect on would-be recruits.

Lord Derby, who had been working for all he was worth on recruiting up in Lancashire, and had already earned for himself the name of "England's best recruiting sergeant," grasped the situation and set to work to put at rest the minds of those who wished to serve their country. I remember so well getting from him a note saying that he wished to see me early in the morning—that would be about the 25th August. That morning I had to go to a field day with my company at Wimbledon (I was then serving as second Captain in

Captain Lord Francis Scott's Company, 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards).

Knowing that he must have something important to talk to me about, I got leave to join them later, and did so just in time to see my Captain vanishing, having been sent for by the War Office, with a view to taking command of a Marine Battalion, and to me fell the lot of conducting an attack on the celebrated Wimbledon Windmill, knowing absolutely nothing whatever about it, and being quite new to platoons, etc., after some few years away from soldiering.

Well, Lord Derby propounded his scheme. He suggested that a battalion be formed—he had at that time a conservative idea of the patriotic feeling in Liverpool and his powers of eloquence—whereby all those who enlisted together from business houses should serve together, and he wished to put me forward to command this Battalion.

At first I must say I was rather overwhelmed with the responsibility of commanding a Battalion—this was beyond my wildest dreams—but he over-persuaded me, as he has a way of doing with most people, and I agreed that if a battalion, such as he outlined, was formed, I would do my best to look after them.

It was a fine idea and one that I was very proud to be associated with. He therefore called a meeting on August the 28th, and here it will be best to give the press account of that memorable gathering—a gathering that was destined to have a most far-reaching effect, not only in Liverpool, but all over the country. The example set by Liverpool was afterwards to be copied all over England.

"August 29th.

LIVERPOOL'S RESPONSE.

Commercial Workers to Contribute 2,000 Men.

Lord Derby's Brother in Command.

BATTALION OF PALS.

Liverpool has responded nobly to the call to arms. Lord Derby's appeal for a Commercial Battalion has resulted in a magnificent demonstration of patriotic eagerness to serve King and country. A single battalion of men from our commercial offices was asked for. Fully 2,000, or sufficient to form two battalions, has been Liverpool's splendid reply to Lord Derby's invitation, and this within 36 hours !

Liverpool has indeed reason to be proud of her sons. The rally they made to Lord Derby's appeal afforded one of the most inspiring scenes of patriotic fervour which has ever been witnessed at a Liverpool military headquarters. Young men were asked to attend the Drill Hall in St. Anne Street at 7-30 last evening, to meet Lord Derby, and signify their willingness to serve. Long before that time men were turning up in crowds, and the room in which the assembly was to be made was filled to its uttermost capacity, and many were unable to obtain admission. As viewed from the platform they formed a grand spectacle. Between 400 and 500 were seated, and in the avenues and balcony hundreds again were standing, the doorways were crammed with this mass of sturdy manhood which overflowed again on the stairs. This at a quarter of an hour before the time ! And still they

were rolling up in their hundreds. A second meeting below was found necessary, at which it was computed a further 1,200 men were waiting, eager to offer themselves for enlistment.

This magnificent response was imposing evidence of the sterling spirit which animates the young men of Liverpool. There was no semblance of jingoism in the atmosphere. True, the reception Lord Derby met with when he stepped on to the platform was as vigorous in its heartiness as it could be, and, indeed, as it deserved to be. But this display of enthusiastic admiration over, the men's demeanour became once more that of determined patriots. There was a suggestion of power in the silent attention which was paid to the weighty words of Lord Derby. That silent enthusiasm now and again broke out in thunderous volume as his lordship unfolded the scheme which was to govern the service of these local patriots.

'I am not going to make to you a speech of heroics,' Lord Derby declared, to the accompaniment of murmurs of approval. 'You have given me your answer, and I can telegraph to Lord Kitchener tonight to say our second battalion is formed.'

Then his lordship went on to speak solemn words as to the duty which lies before this country. 'We have got to see this through to the bitter end and dictate our terms of peace in Berlin, if it takes every man and every penny in this country.' A storm of cheers greeted this declaration. It was a guarantee that Liverpool would do its share to secure such a consummation.

There was another ringing cheer when Lord Derby expressed a desire that this should be a battalion of

pals commanded and officered by pals as far as possible. The guarantee with respect to this homely phrase 'battalion of pals' was to some extent, and in its most essential point, assured when his lordship announced that 'Lord Kitchener has been good enough to tell me that my brother, who is in the Grenadier Guards, will command the battalion.'

Like one man, this 'enormous gathering,' as Lord Derby described it, rose to its feet and cheered vociferously, hats being thrown in the air in this wild burst of enthusiasm. Liverpool dearly loves a Stanley, as indeed it has every reason to do, and the announcement that Major Stanley, D.S.O., will command would have instantly secured the success of the movement for this new battalion had that success not already been achieved.

Another solemn word followed. 'I don't attempt to minimise to you,' Lord Derby said, 'the hardships you will suffer; the risks you will run. I don't ask you to uphold Liverpool's honour; it would be an insult to think you could do anything but that. But I do thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming here to-night and showing what is the spirit of Liverpool, a spirit that ought to spread through every city and every town in the kingdom.' Loud cries of 'It will!' came back instantly like an echo rebounding from this solid phalanx of patriots. 'You have given a noble example,' Lord Derby concluded, 'in thus coming forward. You are certain to give a noble example on the field of battle.'

In twenty minutes this inspiring meeting was at an end, and Lord Derby was soon threading his way through the congested room to another more spacious

apartment where an even greater number of patriots were waiting for this splendid Lancashire leader, who has rendered such noble service to his country. But before Lord Derby left the platform the strains of 'He's a jolly good fellow' burst spontaneously from every quarter, and the meeting was then brought to a close by the singing of the National Anthem.

Similar enthusiasm prevailed at the second meeting, where also it was explained that the response had been so great that the work of attestation would be adjourned to Monday next at St. George's Hall, at times to suit the convenience of all those who offered themselves."

It was clearly understood that no attestations were to be made until the following Monday, in order to give everyone an opportunity of thinking the matter over.

The enthusiastic character of the meeting left no doubt that there would be plenty of work to do, and on August the 31st, at eight o'clock in the morning, we arrived at St. George's Hall full of hopes, but never for one moment expecting the magnificent response which was forthcoming. It was simply bewildering. Again I cannot do better than reproduce the newspaper report of the evening of August the 31st :—

"PALS' FIRST BATTALION COMPLETE.

Full Number Obtained in an Hour.

#### STIRRING SCENES.

Great Rally of Liverpool's Young Business Men.  
‘No Undesirables.’

Lord Derby's Address to the New Recruits.  
Liverpool's Eight Thousand.

The First Battalion of Liverpool 'Pals' for  
Lord Kitchener's New Army, composed of young men

engaged in commercial and business offices in the city, has already been raised. The requisite number of men, 1,030, was obtained in one hour at St. George's Hall to-day. The rush to join was so great that the lists had to be closed for the rest of the day. A second battalion is now to be formed, and attestation for the purpose will be resumed on Wednesday.

To-day's scenes at St. George's Hall are believed to be a record in enlistment in the history of the British Army.

Liverpool has since the war began also provided 3,800 men for the regular Army, and nearly 2,000 for the Territorial Force. With the two 'Pals' battalions and recruiting for other branches of the services the total is roughly 8,000.

Had Liverpool's splendid and patriotic example been followed throughout the country the army of 500,000 asked for by Lord Kitchener would already have been an accomplished fact.

There has been a magnificent response to Lord Derby's appeal for a 'Pals' battalion.

The invitation to the young and eligible men engaged in the ranks of commerce to put aside their pens and take up the sword has met with an electrical reply. Within an hour this battalion of over a thousand men has rolled up.

At St. George's Hall Lord Derby had the men paraded in sections, and for the purpose of a preliminary organisation gave each section its number. Major the Hon. Ferdinand Stanley, the Commander of the 'Pals' battalion, was present with his noble brother, and evinced the keenest interest in the splendid material which was offering itself for military service.

under his direction. His Lordship was in high spirits, delighted as he must have been at the handsome response which had been made to his challenge to the patriotic pride of Liverpool's commercial young men. He asked for one battalion of 1,020 men. Before nine o'clock, he informed an 'Express' representative with great satisfaction that already he had passed 540.

'And this before the time for the doors to open for attestation,' he added, with great gratification.

As a matter of fact, the north door had been opened before the appointed time, in order that there should not be a moment's unnecessary delay. It was, however, impossible to deal with all those who presented themselves, the work of attestation, of course, being a responsible one, which had to be carried out with great care.

At ten o'clock Lord Derby had passed a full battalion of recruits, the total number being 1,050. More batches were still rushing up, and his Lordship had to reluctantly close the lists for the present.

'We can't accept any more to-day,' he explained, and instructions were given to police officers to ask all who presented themselves to return to St. George's Hall at ten o'clock on Wednesday morning. There is every hope and expectation that on that day a second battalion will be formed.

Attestations began shortly before nine o'clock inside St. George's Hall, and will proceed throughout the day and to-morrow. Separate tables are being allotted to each of the following in order to prevent confusion :—

Cotton Association.  
 Corn Trade Association.  
 General Brokers and Stock Exchange.  
 Provision Trade.  
 Seed, Oil and Cake Trade Association.  
 Sugar Trade.  
 Fruit Brokers and Wool Brokers.  
 Steamship Companies, and the Cunard and  
     White Star Lines.  
 Timber Trade.  
 Law Society and Chartered Accountants.  
 Bank and Insurance Offices.

All through the forenoon groups of 'Pals' came to offer themselves for service at St. George's Hall, and the police were very busily engaged in telling them that the work for enlistment for to-day is over and that they must now wait until Wednesday morning at ten o'clock. Many of them went away looking quite crestfallen at being thus temporarily thwarted in their patriotic desire.

At 12-15 the Cunard contingent of 'Pals' were mustered on the Exchange flags. They numbered 120 and were all young fellows in the first flush of manhood—splendid material, after due training, for the main tenance of the honour of the country.

No ceremony attended the gathering, but attention could not fail to be attracted, and speedily a numerous concourse flocked round. The Cunard contingent was in charge of Mr. J. T. Phillips and Mr. Monkman, both members of the office staff. The order 'form fours' was quietly given, and at the rapidly following command 'quick march,' the contingent stepped briskly forward for St. George's Hall. A call for 'three

cheers' was, of course, made and was vigorously responded to by the onlookers. 'A very fit and promising lot' was the universal verdict.

Amongst the officials of the Cunard Line who saw the recruits off was Mr. Mearns (General Manager), Mr. Lister (Assistant Manager), and Mr. Beazley, one of the Directors.

The Cotton Exchange contingent of 218 men had a rousing send-off on leaving the Exchange to-day for drill at Sefton Park. The first detachment parades for attestation to-morrow at 8.30 a.m., and the second at 11.30. Another drill takes place at Sefton Park at 5 p.m. to-morrow.

An 'Express' representative to-day interviewed an officer who is concerned with the work of enlistment now proceeding at St. George's Hall.

'The class of men offering themselves for the 'Pals' Battalion,' he said, 'quite exceeds all anticipations. They are of good physique and possess many fine qualifications. There have been very few rejected by the doctors, and altogether the battalion promises to be a very valuable one. In a short time,' he added, with a smile, 'I hope the 'Pals' Battalion' will have one, and probably two, brother battalions. I think that the way the men have been coming up justifies me in expressing that hope.'

Lord Derby, in expressing his great delight at the result of the call for a Commercial Corps, makes an explanation which is likely to remove a good deal of misunderstanding. Applicants who failed to be enrolled this morning will, of course, be eligible for enlistment subsequently, but it does not follow that, because the First Battalion has received its full

complement, those enrolling later will have to go into the second. Lord Derby makes it quite clear that the formation of the two battalions will be made when the lists are complete, so as to ensure friends serving alongside their own pals, and thus justifying the title which has been given to the new company. For those who have not already given in their names, Wednesday has been fixed as attestation day.

Lord Derby adds that he is receiving telegrams from various outside places, asking whether names from other parts can be accepted for enlistment in the Liverpool Battalion, but it has been decided that the Commercial Corps is to be restricted to Liverpool men, so that the city may have the credit for its formation and maintenance."

Sanction had been received from the War Office that Captain Beeman, King's (Liverpool) Regiment, might be appointed as second-in-command. In addition, the War Office had said that seven officers would be forthcoming to assist. Of these only five arrived, and of this number two were totally unsuitable—not having their hearts in the enterprise—and were quickly disposed of.

And so the work went on through that week. It was most unfortunate that the strain of his past exertions had been too much for Lord Derby, and he was forced to take to his bed—only giving in when he was so ill that he was absolutely forced to. He was in such a condition that within a few days he had to be operated on.

The success was so great and the numbers enlisted had reached such a figure that it was necessary for me

to report personally at the War Office. When the figures, amounting to some 3,000, were given to the Director General of Recruiting, we were told to go easy and for a time rest content with the numbers we had got. It must be remembered that we, at that time, only had authority to raise one battalion, or say, about one thousand men.

This enormous success in Liverpool had had a most stimulating effect all over the country, and everywhere our example was being followed, *i.e.*, the formation of what was called in those days "Pals' Battalions."

So for the week we rested content with about three thousand recruits.

I must confess that my own feeling was that we had got enough to go on with. It was all very well to get recruits, but some arrangements had to be made for housing, feeding, clothing and equipping this number, to say nothing of organising them into battalions.

After enlisting, all were told that they would proceed to their homes and would receive orders in due course.

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## CHAPTER II.

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INSPECTION BY GENERAL SIR H. MACKINNON.  
TRAINING WORK STARTED. OUR INSTRUCTIONS.  
LT.-COLONEL E. H. TROTTER, D.S.O., APPOINTED  
TO COMMAND 18TH BATTALION K.L.R., AND  
LT.-COLONEL E. GOSSET APPOINTED TO COMMAND  
19TH BATTALION K.L.R.

The first order that was given to what was to become the 89th Brigade was to the effect that all recruits would parade on Saturday, September 5th, for inspection by General Sir H. Mackinnon.

Saturday, September 5th, 1914, was certainly a day not to be forgotten by any who were present. I shudder to think of our temerity in saying that we would march past General Sir Henry Mackinnon, Commander-in-Chief of the Western Command, on that day. However, everyone was "out to help," and it was extraordinary the way in which order was evolved out of what at first looked like chaos, and in a short time we were not only divided up into battalions, but also into companies, and as such we remained, without much change, through our training, until the time arrived for us to go across the water.

I do not suppose that ever have battalions been so quickly formed. There were naturally a few changes to be made, but from that time on a fine spirit of friendly, but none the less keen, rivalry started in the first-formed battalions.

The newspaper reports best describe the magnificent show that our raw recruits made on their first parade ; a show which astonished all who saw them—most of all, I think, the inspecting officer.

“THE COMRADES.

Liverpool Battalions Review.

Enthusiastic Scenes.

The scene which took place opposite St. George's Hall on Saturday has never, as a demonstration of Liverpool patriotism, been excelled. There passed in review before thousands of applauding citizens and a small group of critical military officers, a procession of young men who have, in response to the Nation's call, turned their backs upon the business of commerce in order to join in the business of war. There was no vain glory about this display ; the spirit of braggadocio was entirely lacking, nor was there any hysterical flag waving or jingoistic speeches. There was just the tramp, tramp of smart, well-set-up young gentlemen, shoulders thrown back and faces stern and resolute, denoting a determination to go forward with a duty in the cause of civilisation.

These were the comrades that Lord Derby's inspiring message has called to arms. A week previously his Lordship had asked for a thousand men to turn from the ranks of Liverpool commerce and join the ranks of His Majesty's army. Lord Derby knew what he was asking for, and the sacrifices that must be made. He knew also to whom he was appealing. The young men of Liverpool responded magnificently—not one, but three, thousand came

forward. Indeed the response has been positively embarrassing. The work of attestation and medical examination became so heavy that a halt in the recruiting had to be called.

When it was resumed these young patriots returned to the attack in such numbers that a recruiting record was created, no fewer than 850 being accepted for service in one day. On Saturday, 200 who offered themselves had to be content merely to leave their names and addresses, 2,865 having already been enrolled.

Of these 2,400 turned out on Saturday for their first review at Ivy Farm field, near Tramway Road, Aigburth. Under the guidance of drill instructors and ex-Army officers the men made a very promising show. They responded smartly to the military orders, and proved by their general deportment that they not only look, but actually are, good material, which will, after a course of training, be of considerable value for practical war purposes.

After Saturday's review the Comrades marched in excellent style along Aigburth Road in the direction of the city. They had to pass through avenues of cheering people, in which there was a predominating section of admiring members of the gentler sex. The men, with Lieut.-Colonel F. C. Stanley, D.S.O., at their head, marched through the principal streets leading to St. George's Hall, where a great crowd awaited them, evidently with the object of testifying its appreciation of this splendid display of patriotism. When the Comrades, marching four abreast, came into view in Lime Street, a great cheer travelled from one end of St. George's Hall plateau to the other.

Adjacent to the Union Jack which had been erected on the steps, were assembled a group of officers who viewed with great interest, and presumably not a little pleasure, this imposing display of Liverpool's young manhood. The Comrades marched in capital style, all the more praiseworthy because of the absence of bands, or even drums, to aid the rhythm of the steps, and there was a general opinion, frequently expressed, that the men would take very little licking into shape. They executed a neat movement from Lime Street to the south end of the plateau, passed the salute across the open space, and proceeded to the point of dismissal in William Brown Street.

Indisposition prevented Lord Derby from being present to witness the fruits of his patriotic labour, but in his stead were Lady Derby and Lady Victoria Stanley, who manifested the deepest interest in the march past. Also at the saluting point were General Sir Henry Mackinnon, General Foster (Commanding the West Lancashire Forces), General Edwards (Commanding the Mersey Defences), Colonel Dunlop (Intelligence Officer), Major Peck, R.A., and Major Dove, R.E.

It has not yet been decided whether the enlistment of further Comrades will be invited. There are now practically three battalions in Liverpool, and the one which Wirral is fast producing will make a brigade of which Lieut.-Colonel Stanley will undoubtedly prove a worthy commander. There is an idea entertained that the Comrades will be sent away for training early this week, but there is no official communication on that point which can yet be made."

After the parade all were dismissed and sent away to their homes, so as to make preparation for getting regularly into harness.

On Monday, September 7th, work began in earnest.

It was clearly necessary that we should have instructors who were capable of drilling properly and well, and with that object in view, Sunday was spent most profitably by a visit to the Regimental Orderly Room of the Grenadier Guards in London.

There I was most fortunate in securing the services of Drill Sergeant Morgan, Sergeant Gray, Sergeant Goodman, Sergeant Claire, Sergeant Rea and Corporal Emery.

One could never hope to find a better lot than these, and this affords a good opportunity for expressing to them the very high appreciation we all of us had for their tact, their perseverance, and for the endless trouble they took in making raw recruits into first class soldiers.

Drill Sergeant Morgan was made Sergeant-Major of the 17th Battalion, and specialized in training officers, and none who served under him will forget this training. Always tactful and willing to help, but as fine a disciplinarian as one could ever hope to meet. Alas! he worked himself to death, and succumbed after a few months, beloved by all with whom he had come in contact.

It is interesting to follow what became of all the others. Gray became Sergeant-Major of the VII. Corps School—that was the last I heard of him. Goodman became Quartermaster of the 17th Battalion. Claire left us before we started out from England. Rea, poor

fellow, was killed just before the 1st July, 1916, at Maricourt—beloved by all his men. Emery commanded the 89th Brigade School, and finally came on to Brigade Headquarters as Intelligence Officer, when he was badly wounded.

To continue, it really was grand to see the way these experts got hold of the men and how they got them to move. It was also very pleasant to hear what they thought of the men—they had never before come across such a keen intelligent lot, and were full of admiration.

At that time we used to do all our drill at Sefton Park—every corner of which was used, but that was only a temporary measure until such time as accommodation could be got ready. It was at this time that we managed to secure the services of Lieut.-Colonel E. H. Trotter, D.S.O., to command the 18th Battalion K.L.R.

I flatter myself that I never spoke a truer word than when I introduced Colonel Trotter to his new Battalion. I told them that within a very short time they would absolutely worship him. In an incredibly short space of time he had endeared himself to one and all, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that there had never been such love and respect as there was between this battalion and its Commanding Officer. From the first moment till the day of his death, in July, 1916, he never had any other thought than the welfare and well-being of the 18th Battalion, and right nobly did they respond. His memory still remains, and always will remain, fresh in the minds of all who served under him or alongside him.

Colonel Gosset, an old King's officer, took command of the 19th Battalion. His keenness also set a splendid example to his men, and from now on all the three

battalions took definite shape and characteristics—characteristics which it was most curious to see, through many months of changes, of rough times and smooth times, of fighting, of re-construction, still remained with them, and, to a certain extent, exists to the present day.

It was early in September that the 17th Battalion moved from their homes in Liverpool and the neighbourhood to the old watch factory at Prescot. This had been converted into a barracks.

This was a great step and certainly marked a new era. It meant that, to a certain extent, we had to be self-supporting, especially as from now on food had to be supplied. This was one of our chief difficulties and was a constant source of worry to me.

After all these years one has nearly forgotten what had to be done in these early days, but it rather comes back to me now, looking, as I am, through old notes, etc. I have no wish to blow my own trumpet, but rather to draw attention to the admirable work done by all at this time. It certainly was a herculean task, and I shudder to think of what we had to do and what difficulties we had to overcome.

To start with, one had to accept the situation that we should get no assistance from the Government—they had their hands much too full—and that we had to work out our own salvation.

Apart from the hundred and one little details, the main points that we had to deal with were the housing, feeding, clothing, equipping, officering and training of some three thousand men. I was at that time devoutly thankful that there were no more.

I am much indebted to Major Beeman for his capital organising powers.

This time brought to notice another man who, from the time he started till the time he laid down his task, has been absolutely invaluable to the 89th Brigade. I refer to Captain G. Torrey. As all of us know he became Staff Captain when the Brigade was formed and he has often been referred to, by people inside the Brigade and outside, as "the best Staff Captain in France." His grasp was wonderful and his energy unbounded. We one and all owe him a very deep debt of gratitude.

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### CHAPTER III.

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#### THE HOUSING OF THE FIRST THREE BATTALIONS. THE HUTS IN KNOWSLEY PARK. FEEDING— CLOTHING—EQUIPPING, ETC. THE OFFICERS.

The housing problem was a decidedly difficult one. As I said before, we had to work out our own salvation. Arrangements had already been made, when we thought we should only get about a battalion, to put them in the watch factory at Prescot. It was not ideal, as many of us remember, but it was a palace compared with many places we have had to put up with since.

This was allotted to the 17th Battalion, being the senior battalion. Many times I think they would have given up this honour in order to change to better quarters, but many have, since those days, referred to this first military home there in really affectionate terms.

In order to assist, the Directors of the Hooton Park Racecourse most generously came forward and gave us the free use of their property, including the stands, and this was allotted to the 18th Battalion. They were, I can confidently say, extremely happy there and were very loath to leave it when the time came

This still left the 19th Battalion unprovided for, and this was a most serious conundrum. It was apparent that there was no place available for them near ground which could be utilized for training, and, therefore, the only thing to be done was to build the

accommodation required. This meant a considerable outlay of money, and before embarking on this it was necessary to obtain the sanction of the Government. By this time the weather had rather broken, and we were experiencing a certain amount of wet, so it was necessary to push through the matter as soon as possible. A telegram, therefore, was sent to the War Office, asking for sanction to be given us to build the huts.

We had but a rough idea, at the time, as to what the cost would be, but from memory I think the amount that was put down was about £9,000 per camp. Within a very short time we got the sanction of the Government. As a matter of fact, they were only too pleased for us to take all the weight off their hands, as they were very busy elsewhere.

A lucky chance, *i.e.*, a drain bursting in Prescot Barracks, brought to our notice the fact that one of Liverpool's leading architects had enlisted in our ranks —one Gilbert Fraser by name—and he was at once appointed architect-in-chief to our force, and as such remained until he was seized upon by the R.E.'s. in France some two years later. It was a perfect joy to work with him. No difficulties were ever raised—or rather, if they were raised, he immediately set to work to overcome them, and for the whole time in which we were working together we never had any differences whatever.

When we got our sanction for building, he at once proceeded to get out plans and, I think, we can fairly congratulate ourselves on the result. We have seen scores of camps since that time, and I cannot say that any of these were better than the camps that we laid out in Knowsley Park.

In this connection, it would be wrong if I did not introduce the name of Mr. Bullen, the contractor, in whose hands we placed the work. He had endless difficulties in the way of labour and providing materials, but it was wonderful the way in which he overcame them. Fraser and I could tell many stories over this hutting scheme, but space will not admit of that.

The plans were got out extremely quickly—within two or three days ; the contract placed, and, within a week, work was actually commenced on the site.

It was clear that we could not indefinitely make use of the hospitality of the Hooton Park directors for the 18th Battalion ; therefore, we started, at the same time, to build a camp for them alongside the one destined for the 19th Battalion.

About the end of October or the beginning of November, the first camp was ready, and the 19th Battalion marched in. They at once made themselves comfortable, and were, I think, rather pleased to feel that they were embarking on a new life after the daily coming up to Sefton Park. Within a short time afterwards, we were able to transfer the 18th Battalion from Hooton Park to Knowsley, and they at once shook down in their new quarters.

It is rather pleasing to think that these camps have been regularly in use ever since that time, and have stood well. I think we may congratulate ourselves on these huts. They were practically the first ones that were completed in England ; and long after the time when our men were comfortably established in them, we were hearing of numerous complaints all over the country, from people who were still living in the middle of winter in tents and having a more or less

miserable time, whilst here we were, with not only sleeping accommodation, cook-houses, wash houses, drying rooms, but we had recognised in these early days that amusement and entertainment figures to a certain extent in the daily life of a soldier, and a very fine theatre had been erected which, incidentally, cost the sum of about £600. Well was it worth this money.

It can be seen now that one was somewhat overwhelmed with the idea of having three thousand men on one's hands and not a scrap of food to give them. The only thing to do was to get to work at once to make arrangements for looking after this department. Captain Torrey was invaluable in this way, and before long he had managed to fix up a contract for, at all events, the feeding of the 17th Battalion in Prescot Barracks. It is no small order to suddenly have to feed a thousand men regularly, and day after day—a very different matter to just occasionally catering for a large number ; and I think, taking it all through, the feeding, although there were occasional lapses, was of quite good standard. No doubt those who were with us at that time will remember one ought to have made allowances for the growth of their appetites. Coming, as they did, from more or less office life, and being brought into an outdoor life with plenty of exercise, worked wonders with them, and whereas at the beginning they could barely eat the amount put in front of them, after a week or so many were the calls for second helpings.

We went through many anxieties on this score of feeding, such as lorries breaking down, etc., but on the whole it worked fairly well, and the contractors must be congratulated on having successfully dealt with a very difficult problem. It was quite clear that the same

caterers could not deal with the 18th Battalion at Hooton Park, and other arrangements had to be made as regards them. The 19th Battalion, until the time when they came into the huts, were given money in lieu of rations, and were self-supporting.

The understanding, when the City Battalions were first formed, was that the Government were to be relieved, to all intents and purposes, of all work in connection with these battalions. In most towns committees were formed to deal with the various matters which arose ; but we stoutly opposed the idea of committees, and infinitely preferred to run the show ourselves.

Steps as regards clothing were taken at the first possible moment, and it might interest some to know that Mrs. Stanley, who has taken such an interest in the comforts for the men ever since, was wired to in the early morning of the first day of recruiting, telling her that she was to arrange, by hook or by crook, to contract for the clothing of at least a thousand men. This appears a tall order, but within a very few hours she was able to wire back that the contract had been fixed up for clothing the men in khaki in a few weeks. This was much appreciated later by those serving in our City Battalions, because they were able to go about clothed in khaki, instead of having to go about in that terrible blue uniform, which was worn by most of the locally raised battalions, and which looked awful. We were lucky in making our arrangements so early, because within a very short time, it was practically impossible to get any khaki at all. It sounds from this as if all this was very plain sailing, and that one simply had to give the orders for the things and they were forthcoming.

But this was very far from being the case, and the difficulties and worries were endless. Everyone was keen to get into uniform and to show that they had been one of the early ones to come up ; but delays, for various reasons, were inevitable.

Of course, whenever one wanted anything, one was invariably told that it was out of stock, or that the manufacturers could not supply. Boots were one of our great difficulties, but these, although there were indifferent lots among them, we really did rather well over, and after a very short time whenever any boots came into the market I was not to be caught napping, and bought them up at once. The result was that after a bit we had all our fellows well booted ; and at the time when we were handed over to the authorities, I had the pleasure of handing them over at the same time something like 1,500 or 2,000 pairs of boots extra.

Greatcoats were also another great difficulty ; but I was rather pleased that, in after days, when we could draw on the Ordnance for greatcoats, in one particular instance the Ordnance greatcoats were returned and our own old ones kept. It shows that they were not so very bad after all. So far so good. And now came the question of equipping.

This was more difficult because practically the whole of that was in Government hands, and it was useless to think of applying to the authorities for any equipment. They had, at that time, thousands of men to provide for, and we should have had no chance of getting our share. So the only thing again was to go in for private contract, and in this respect, as in many others, we were indebted to the help of the West Lancashire Territorial Association, with Major Parkes at

their head. I might mention, incidentally, that all payments were made through this body, and we were dependent entirely on their help in this matter.

To give an idea as to the amount of extra work put on them, it might interest people to know that during the first three or four months of our existence we spent no less a sum than £120,000, and now I don't mind saying that, although this sum sounds a large one, we actually saved for the Government the sum of £30,000 on the amounts that they were prepared to grant in the way of hutting and clothing.

To come back, the equipment that we wanted to provide was the web equipment, which was at that time in use in the Regular Army, but this was found to be quite impossible, and we had to content ourselves with the leather equipment which was introduced at this time. Although perhaps not so good as the web, this has served its purpose very well indeed.

Now as regards rifles, the thought of this, at that time, very nearly drove me to an early grave. It was absolutely impossible for us to get rifles from anybody but the Government, and the delay in supplying these was simply lamentable. For months we went on training without any rifles at all, and then it was only after great pressure, and a certain amount of kindly and preferential treatment from the authorities, that we were able to get just a few to train with. Those poor old rifles! I was indeed sorry for them. They were never out of use, with being handed from one company to another, so that eventually, with such hard use, they got into a deplorably bad condition. They started by being condemned rifles and we were not allowed to fire them as they were not considered safe. If only we could have

had rifles in these early days, we should have been fit to go to France months and months before. It was not until about a year after we had been formed that we were fully armed.

As I have mentioned before, there was only one regular officer attached to us. Seven more had been promised by the War Office, but of these seven, five had arrived and of these five, two were sent away as being absolutely useless.

In these early days I made up my mind, from the experience I had gained, that we would train our own officers and be self-supporting in this respect ; and I have every reason to feel that this was by far the wisest course to pursue. The officers that we created in these days were absolutely magnificent, and would have been a credit to any battalion which had been in existence in the Regular Army. Their keenness and intelligence was wonderful, and if it had not been for them we should never have carried on the work as we did. The Officers' Course was formed by our old friend, Morgan, and under his splendid training his pupils rapidly became officers of the highest standard.

We subsequently formed an Officers' Training School, and from this school not only did we supply ourselves with all that we required, but we also supplied officers for many of the Manchester Battalions and also for the County Palatine Artillery ; and many were the letters of grateful thanks that we received—not only from these battalions, but from officers themselves—for the training they had had.

This, again, was, I think, one of the earliest—if not *the* earliest—Officers' Training School in the new army.

Before leaving this subject, I must express my gratitude to Colonel Elliott, of the Military Secretary's Department at the War Office. To him fell the lot of supplying officers for the new armies—a most thankless task. In these difficult times, no one could have been more helpful than he was. Although he was worried to death by others as well as ourselves, he always laid himself out to do what he could for us. He had confidence in us and we had the same in him, the result being that whenever we put forward names for officers, they were always appointed straight away, instead of having to wait ages. There was no doubt he took a very friendly interest in our battalions, and continues to do so after all these four years. He has been a very true friend to us, and we owe him a great deal.

## CHAPTER IV.

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FORMATION OF 20TH BATTALION K.L.R.  
 PRELIMINARY MEETING. MARCH OF 17TH  
 BATTALION K.L.R. THROUGH LIVERPOOL.  
 FORMATION OF 21ST AND 22ND BATTALIONS  
 K.L.R. (RESERVE BATTALIONS).

We were now very fairly well organised, and our arrangements were such that we were quite prepared to embark on a fourth battalion for the Brigade. Sanction was applied for from the War Office to form this battalion, and it was readily granted. Therefore, Lord Derby, our recruiter-in-chief, called together a meeting in Liverpool for the purpose of seeing if we could raise one more battalion for the city. The following advertisement was put in the Liverpool papers :—

**“ COMRADES’ BATTALIONS.**

Lord Derby will hold a meeting at the Drill Hall of the 5th Battalion King’s (Liverpool) Regiment, St. Anne’s Street, on Wednesday next, at 8 o’clock, where he hopes to meet RECRUITS FOR THE ABOVE.

**LORD DERBY IS RAISING A FOURTH BATTALION OF COMRADES,** and has no doubt, after the recent strenuous appeals of Lord Kitchener for more men, that there must be many young men of the Comrade stamp eager to join the colours.

Any man may be attested at the meeting, or on Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. at the Sessions House, Islington. Men who have already sent their names to Lord Derby will get a post card from him telling them the time and place for attestation.”



Maj.-Gen. W. FRY.



This was at the beginning of October, 1914. The meeting was very well attended, and it was clear that there was still plenty of material left for us to work on. In order to give the recruiting a stimulus, what was then called the 1st City Battalion, King's (Liverpool) Regiment, and afterwards called the 17th Battalion, marched through the streets of Liverpool to show that our time had not been wasted since they were formed.

**"1ST CITY BATTALION, KING'S (LIVERPOOL)  
REGIMENT."**

**TO-MORROW (TUESDAY)** 3rd instant, the BATTALION WILL MARCH, leaving Prescot at 9 o'clock, arriving SEFTON PARK at 11-30, where there will be a halt of one hour. Leave at 12-30 and MARCH THROUGH THE CITY *via* Prince's Avenue, Renshaw Street, Church Street, Lord Street, Castle Street, Dale Street, and take the most direct route back to Prescot.

By kind permission of Colonel Tripp, commanding the Depôt of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, Seaforth, the details of the 1st Battalion Band will proceed with the 1st City Battalion through the City."

Never was there such a reception as was given to them on the 3rd November. The streets throughout were packed, and the welcome was of a most enthusiastic character.

**"THE 'COMRADES.'**  
**March through the Streets of Liverpool.**  
**Enthusiastic Reception.**

The citizens of Liverpool yesterday gave an enthusiastic greeting to the 'Comrades' of the 1st City Battalion of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, who marched through the streets of the city fully

equipped for service. Liverpool is justly proud of the newly-raised 'Comrades' Battalions, and the result was that, long before the battalion was due in the heart of the city, the route was lined by thousands of spectators. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, sweethearts, friends—all came in small battalions to see the 'Comrades' on their first march through the city. So dense were the crowds in some parts that the traffic was temporarily held up. Fortunately the weather was brilliantly fine for the occasion. The battalion had a long and fatigueing tramp, but the two months' training that they have put in at Prescot has worked wonders in their physical condition. Leaving Prescot soon after 9 o'clock they marched, headed by Colonel Stanley and the regimental band of the 1st Battalion of the 'King's' (by kind permission of Colonel Tripp, commanding the Depôt at Seaforth) to Sefton Park, where a halt was made for lunch, prior to partaking of which the men were addressed by Lord Derby. Subsequently the march round Liverpool was continued, *via* Prince's Avenue, Leece Street, Renshaw Street, Church Street, Lord Street, Castle Street, Dale Street, and back to Prescot by London Road.

All along the route the men, who presented a very smart and soldier-like appearance, were heartily cheered. A specially enthusiastic reception was accorded to them as they passed through the business centres, office 'comrades' waving handkerchiefs and loudly cheering their old colleagues now in the ranks. The spectacle was truly impressive, and all who witnessed it could not but feel highly pleased with the excellent progress made by Liverpool's young soldier

sons in the brief space of time they have been preparing themselves to become an efficient unit of Lord Kitchener's army.

Colonel Stanley has every reason to be proud of his men, and his beaming smile, as he rode at their head, clearly indicated that he was more than satisfied with his command.

Several members of the mounted police accompanied the battalion.

Great interest is being evinced in the meeting which Lord Derby is holding to-night at the Drill Hall of the 5th Battalion, King's (Liverpool) Regiment, St. Anne Street, with a view to encouraging recruiting for the new battalion (4th) of the Liverpool Comrades' Brigade.

It was arranged that the recruits were to be attested at this meeting or on Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. at the Sessions House, Islington. We are now informed by Lord Derby that Thursday is full up for attestation, and consequently new recruits will now require to be attested either this evening at the meeting or on Friday after 9 a.m."

Altogether it was a very good day in more ways than one, because not only did it help in the way of recruiting, but also it gave to their old friends in Liverpool an opportunity of seeing what a fine force the 17th Battalion had become, and that the time had not been wasted. The remarks as to their appearance were of a most complimentary character.

With the means that we had at our disposal, it was a comparatively easy task to deal with the recruits as they came forward, even though they came, as they did, in large numbers; and within a very short time

the 4th City Battalion, or, as it was afterwards called, the 20th Battalion K.L.R., was very soon organised. Lieut.-Colonel Wilfred Ashley was given command of the battalion and had, as his second-in-command, Major Smith, of the Liverpool Constabulary. They were housed at the Tournament Hall near Knotty Ash, and at once embarked on their period of training. I should be omitting a very important fact if I did not mention that Lieut. Bracken had been appointed Adjutant of the Battalion. He was a host in himself, and his experience with the Irish Guards out in France was of the greatest value to us all.

It was recognised that their stay at Tournament Hall could only be of a temporary nature, so therefore another camp, just outside the Park at Knowsley, was at once started for them. The 20th Battalion came under the heading of all our other contracts as regards feeding, clothing, and equipping, and from the supply of officers which we had trained at that time, it was comparatively an easy task to supply them with the necessary article.

So there we were by the beginning of November ; not only one battalion, as we had set ourselves out to raise from the City of Liverpool—but a Brigade of four battalions raised from the City.

We were not to be caught again, and, in view of wastage, having formed the four battalions, we proceeded to form another two battalions, which were to be the reserve battalions of the Brigade. So that altogether, by the time we had done, we had got six battalions over strength, constituting a figure of not less than 6,000 men.

## CHAPTER V.

FORMATION OF THE 17TH, 18TH, 19TH AND  
20TH BATTALIONS K.L.R. INTO A BRIGADE.  
BRIGADE COMMANDER APPOINTED. THE  
STAFF. TRAINING AT KNOWSLEY.  
INSPECTION BY LORD KITCHENER IN  
LIVERPOOL. THE DIGGING. SPORTS.

In December, the authorities gave orders as regards brigading our separate battalions, and General Mackinnon, who came over to inspect us, asked me if I should like to have command of the Brigade formed of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions K.L.R. I must own to having been very much flattered by his suggestion, but at the same time I was extremely diffident about accepting it, and asked him if I might have a few days in which to consider it. The next thing that I knew was an order from the War Office to say that I had been appointed to command the 110th Brigade, as it was then called. This was subsequently altered to the 89th Brigade—a number that I know all of us will look back to with enormous pride—not only at the present time, but in years to come.

This left a vacancy for the command of the 17th battalion, and, as luck would have it, I heard that Lieut.-Colonel Bryan Fairfax had just come back from France and was anxious to obtain command of a battalion with a view to taking it out to France. The find was of a most fortunate description, and the services which he rendered to the 17th Battalion cannot

be too highly appreciated. He had a thorough knowledge of soldiering and made the best of it with his newly-formed battalion.

On receiving my appointment, the first step was to get the help of a suitable Brigade Major, and my old friend, Trotter, suggested a name for which I shall never be sufficiently grateful to him, and that was Captain Edward Seymour, Grenadier Guards. He had been on the sick list for some time, but was gradually improving in health, and he was delighted to come to us. The best proof that he was happy was that, from the day he came, he speedily improved in health, and from that time he never looked back. All those who were serving at that time will never forget all that he did for the Brigade. Captain Torrey had been practically, and was now actually, appointed Staff Captain, and as a Staff, nobody could have had a better than we had in these two officers. Months, or even years later in France, they have been always looked upon as being the ideal Brigade Major and Staff Captain.

From that time, all our stay at Knowsley was devoted practically entirely to training. We had our difficulties, particularly in the way of musketry, there being no range available and, if there had been, no rifles to shoot with; but there is no doubt we made the best progress we possibly could during that time. The proof was that when, at the end of April, 1915, we joined the newly-formed 30th Division, our Divisional Commander expressed his great satisfaction at the performance of our men.

One of the best forms of training that we embarked on was to send away, each in their turn, a battalion for two or three days at a time, billet them in some village,

and let them shift for themselves. This was of immense value to them afterwards, when it formed part of their ordinary life in France, and I am sure that as a result of this training, they were able to shake down in new quarters much quicker than other battalions who had not had such a training. The outstanding feature of our time at Knowsley was the inspection by Lord Kitchener on March the 20th, 1915, and I cannot do better than reproduce the account of this inspection from the Liverpool papers.

There were few of us who were not very proud of our performance on that day.

**"THE MARCH PAST.    LORD KITCHENER'S VISIT.**

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**12,000 Troops Paraded.    Striking Liverpool Scenes.**

Liverpool, Sunday.

To-day Lord Kitchener witnessed a parade of 12,000 men of his Army on the plateau of St. George's Hall, Liverpool. He arrived at noon. He departed an hour later. Meanwhile he had been at the heart of an event which had caused the gathering of a hundred thousand spectators whose enthusiasm was mightily quickened by the march past and by the presence of the war chief in the city wherein was initiated the very movement by which were formed the major portion of the troops on parade.

The vast crowd waits expectantly. It has been gathering for hours. But noon is near. Three minutes to twelve! Cheering heralds Lord Kitchener's approach. He passes from the station and across Lime Street on to the plateau, walking quietly, gravely, with the Earl of Derby and the Lord Mayor.

Now and then he raises his right arm to the salute in response to the cheers. And so he comes round to the great steps, is greeted by the Lady Mayoress of Liverpool, and chats for a few minutes to her ladyship and the Mayor and Mayoress of Birkenhead and Mr. Bigland ; and then selects his position at the saluting base. That is to say, he steps down to the ground level, stands there easily, but immovably, as we shall see, and looks straight forward. Instantly commences the march past. Following an officer and a dozen men of the County Palatine Artillery come, four abreast, rank on rank, the five thousand 'Comrades.'

Tramp, tramp, tramp ! Quickly they come and springily. Their movement to the beat of the drum and the sound of brass is just rhythmic. Swinging along—steady and strong—are these men, these lithe, up-standing lads with something like the heather-step, the clerks and business folks who, a few short months ago, took the tram home o' nights lest they be tired ! They are. Rank on rank of hefty manhood, the flower of Liverpool's citizenship, lifting past in perfect order, officers saluting and being saluted by Kitchener, the men "eyes left," showing in all their movement the quality of their training. And the War Chief stands immobile, save that now and again he follows with his eyes slightly a rank or a man by whom cause of notice may have been given. He stands, as I have said, easily, but immovably.

We are anticipating. We are watching the 'Comrades' swing past, and we are thinking how the thousands of homes represented in the crowd have

also their representatives in the ranks, and how the hearts of the spectators must thrill with pride as their kith and kin in the tramping battalions go on their way. Now the four battalions have passed; now come the other men, the 14th Cheshire, the 10th South Lancashires—men of ever famous fighting regiments—the 16th King's. All go well—'the men are splendid.'

It was an ideal day for an event of this nature. Spring sunshine gave its benediction to the whole affair, and made of the masses of people stretching from the south end of Lime Street far away to the distant vistas of the Wellington Monument and vicinity a brilliant spectacle. What a splendid setting for a picture in which we see 'the troops go marching by!' The majestic columns of St. George's Hall rising behind the spacious plateau, wide streets, myriads of people banking every point of vantage as far as the eye could reach. Concentrated in that area were something like 100,000 people. Windows, roofs and all sorts of strange nooks and corners were occupied with sightseers. On the steps of St. George's Hall the effect was kaleidoscopic in the bright sunshine, as the various tints of the forest of millinery of the ladies were shown up, conspicuously relieved here and there with khaki or the richer uniform of a naval officer. Amongst the large assembly on the steps, the section set apart only for ticket holders, were representatives of Liverpool's civic life—aldermen, councillors and magistrates—as well as leading business men. All looked on with pleased interest.

The parade was timed to begin at noon, but two hours before this the spectators were hurrying to

secure the best places behind the barricades and other available spots. Shortly after eleven o'clock the City Police Band, under Mr. C. R. Bicks, the bandmaster, entered the plateau, followed shortly afterwards by Lord Derby's Recruiting Band, under Bandmaster Holroyd. The Police Band rendered preliminary harmonies, both sacred and secular, the selections including two well-known hymns and a familiar chorale. Alderman Maxwell, Chairman of the Watch Committee, and the Head Constable (Mr. F. Caldwell), the Assistant Head Constable (Mr. Everett), and Chief Superintendent Smith, were busy seeing that everything was in readiness for the arrival of the distinguished visitor.

Then a tumultuous shout heralded the arrival. Lord Kitchener had been the guest overnight of Lord Derby at Knowsley. In company with Lord Derby and Lady Derby and a party from Knowsley, 'K. of K.' travelled from Huyton yesterday forenoon to Lime Street Station, arriving there punctually at twelve o'clock. The party included Lady Victoria Stanley and the Hon. Neil Primrose, M.P. (Lord Derby's future son-in-law), Lord Gerard (who has been invalided home badly wounded and is rejoining his regiment to-morrow), and Lady Gerard; Lady Blanche Seymour, the wife of Captain Seymour, of the Grenadier Guards, the Brigade Major of the 'Comrades,' and Mrs. Ashley, the wife of Colonel Ashley, Commanding Officer of the 4th City of Liverpool Battalion. They emerged from the station through the entrance of the hotel which leads into Lime Street, being met by the Lord Mayor (Mr. J. E. Raynor). Deafening cheers arose as the soldierly figure of Lord Kitchener,

wearing his military service uniform, walked slowly across Lime Street and on to the plateau. He shook hands with the Lady Mayoress in the private enclosure, and then took up his position at the saluting base with his staff officers. These were Sir Archibald Murray, lately Chief Staff Officer to Sir John French and now Inspector-General of the whole of Lord Kitchener's Army ; Colonel Fitzgerald, Aide-de-camp ; and General Sir Henry Mackinnon, in Command of the Western Division. There were also present in the enclosure the Mayor and Mayoress of Birkenhead (Mr. and Mrs. Arkle) and Mr. Alfred Bigland, M.P., who has been so worthily instrumental in creating the 'Bantam's' Battalions at Birkenhead.

The composition of the parade may here be mentioned. It was headed by General Abdy and twelve men representing the County Palatine Artillery (Lord Derby's 'Comrades' Brigades now in course of formation). Then came four City of Liverpool Battalions, the 'Comrades,' in full service equipment, each battalion about 1,350 strong, and in command of Brigadier-General Stanley. Following these were three battalions now undergoing training in Cheshire—the 14th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, the 10th Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment, and the 16th Battalion of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment and the two Birkenhead Battalions of 'Bantams'—the 15th and 16th Battalions of the Cheshire Regiment.

The marching throughout was splendid. The activity and the spirit of the men was shown in the fine pace with which they swept along, in spite of the distances which some of the battalions, especially the 'Pals,' had had to cover before reaching the review

ground. This doubtless had the effect of completing the march past in shorter time than was anticipated, the actual time taken for the men to pass being 37 minutes. The 'Comrades' are men of fine physique, and they moved with a spring suggesting elasticity, yet firmness of muscle. But this was also the physical characteristic of all the other battalions, including the 'Bantams,' who evoked a popular cheer as they came in view. These recruits have developed marvellously. They marched well considering their stature, and evidently impressed Lord Kitchener. The great soldier was keenly interested. Erect and of dignified demeanour, he received the salutes of the officers and acknowledged the same in the formal way without any display. For the most part he maintained that imperturbability of expression for which he is noted, his face, however, occasionally breaking into a little smile as some detail especially attracted his notice. But he was observing everything with a critical eye, and that occasional backward look of his suggested his close attention to minutiae. With the exception of a brief observation now and then to Sir Henry Mackinnon, or to the Commanding Officers as they dropped out after saluting and joined the other officers at the base, Lord Kitchener kept his eyes fixed on the men as they passed him. He spoke to Brigadier-General Stanley, as that officer left his regiment, and, judging by the latter's pleased countenance, his Lordship's comment was evidently one of approval.

The march past concluded, the National Anthem was played, after which Lord Kitchener, accompanied by the Commanding Officers near him, walked up

the steps into St. George's Hall. We understand that he briefly addressed the officers."

From all that we had heard from France, it was very clear to us that there was one portion of the training which required a very great deal of attention, and that was digging. Everyone in France impressed on us the fact that the spade was nearly as important—if not more important—than the rifle, and our men, recruited as they were from the city and mainly from offices, had but a very slight knowledge of digging; in fact, many of them, I suppose, had never used a spade before in their lives, still less a pick, so that we had to make arrangements for this branch of training.

The country all round about Knowsley was very highly cultivated, and it was impossible for us to secure ground for digging outside the Park; so it resolved itself into our having to make arrangements with Lord Derby to make a mess of some of his property. The actual digging of trenches was not so essential. What we had to do was to get the men to handle pick and shovel, and if we had only limited ourselves to digging trenches, the area of ground required would have been a very extensive one. Lord Derby, always agreeable to help if he could, did not, from the very first, much welcome the idea of this digging, but I impressed upon him the necessity for doing it and he agreed that it must be carried out.

The next thing to do was to choose the site, and this he left to me to propose to him. There was a big bank quite close to the house, and I proposed that we should set our energies to work to clear away this bank, which would have the effect of training the men to

dig and also would not do permanent damage to the grounds. I am afraid I rather under-estimated the task, or, rather, I over-estimated the powers of our men for moving earth, the result being that in spite of the many hours of work (and play) that were spent on that ground, the task was still uncompleted when we went away. It was a very fine scheme and would have been grand if it had been completed. As it is, to this day it remains, I am afraid, somewhat an eyesore.

Lord Derby at the outset said that he did not desire any work done, but that he saw the necessity of providing us with ground on which to do it. After I had propounded my scheme to him he agreed that it should be done; but in order that no one should be able to throw a stone at him on the subject, although he was not desirous of the work being undertaken, he insisted on having the work which we completed valued by an expert valuer, and at the end of our time he would pay the maximum rate for that work. This payment was to be made into a fund which would be called the Comrades' Fund and would be for the use of the battalions. He would not consent to the work being commenced until we had agreed to these conditions. This matter was referred to the various Commanding Officers and it was agreed by them that not only was this a fair arrangement, but a most generous one. When the time came for the work to be valued, it amounted to between £600 and £700, and Lord Derby paid into our fund the sum of £1,000. A few people who did not know the facts of the case, and who would have had a grievance over anything, and who were only too anxious to have a dig at a public spirited man, did not

hesitate to say that he had employed the men of the City Battalions to carry out work for him. This libel has long been set at rest, but it is just as well, in these pages, to re-state the whole case, and to show that, so far from him getting any advantage out of what we had done, he was distinctly the loser, because not only did he have to pay £1,000 to our Comrades' Fund, but it has entailed considerable further expenditure to him afterwards. Many is the time out in France that we have laughed and joked over this digging, and many also are the remarks that have been made that if it had not been for that we should not have been so good at digging as we were. By this I do not mean that we were really good, because we were not. We could do a task if it was set for us, but it was always a question of doing it by means of good spirit rather than by proficiency in handling tools. On that ground we really did waste an enormous amount of time and energy. The energy, by working parties not being properly organised, and the time, by reason of the light-heartedness of those who were digging. It was much more interesting to them to send the trucks flying down the railway as hard as they could and capsizing at the end, than of completing their task ; and as for the poor old statue in the wall, it became so plastered with mud as to be nearly unrecognisable, but it was always a source of joy to each battalion in turn.

If Lord Derby did not care for this digging being done, there is certainly one person who hated it far more, and that was Lady Derby. It was a constant source of worry to her tidy mind. The light-heartedness of our people was not only confined to the digging area, but, at various times in the day, they were all over

the place. They got into the kitchen ; they got into the house ; they got into the stables and rode all the horses. But it was a pleasure to see all these cheery fellows about the place, and it did a certain amount of good in the way of teaching them to organise working parties and to use a pick and shovel. Nobody can say that Lord or Lady Derby were gainers over these digging operations ; they have only to go and look at the present time, and they will find it is still uncompleted now.

These operations brought to light one of our best of fellows, Captain, as he was then, and now Lieut.-Colonel Peck, commanding the 19th Battalion whilst Colonel Rollo was away wounded. He used to be in supreme charge of the operations, and the credit is due to him of getting as much work done as was done.

Another form of training that we specialised in was rifle shooting, but we had to content ourselves with shooting with miniature rifles, as there were none others available. In this respect Colonel Trotter, with all his knowledge, was of the utmost assistance, and from him were learned very many useful tips. The result of his training was very clearly shown in his own battalion when it came to actual shooting with a rifle.

Of course at that time bombs and Lewis guns were practically unheard of, so they did not come into our sphere of training at all.

It must not be thought that the whole of this time was given up to hard work without any amusement whatever. On the other hand, we all of us used to enjoy ourselves considerably and had very good fun. We started having cross-country runs in which practically the whole lot took part, and at that time I would gladly have backed our brigade against any other brigade in





the world. Of course the absolute champion was little Olley. He was a perfect marvel, and simply raced away from everybody else. Not only did he win everything at Knowsley, but afterwards at Grantham and also in France, he always took the prize for whatever race he ran in. Poor little fellow ! Alas, he is no more. He was wounded in the trenches and it appeared to be only more or less a slight wound. He came out laughing, but before a week had passed he lost a leg, and then an arm, and then an eye, and, finally, one of the most gallant little fellows succumbed. He was a great loss to us in many ways.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### CHANGE OF COMMAND IN THE 20TH BATTALION. THE BADGE. CHRISTMAS AT KNOWSLEY AND PRESOCOT. DEPARTURE FOR GRANTHAM.

Unfortunately Colonel Ashley had been suffering from ill-health for a very considerable time, and he had been fighting it with the greatest pluck, but the trouble that he was suffering from, *i.e.*, sciatica, became too much for him, and, after many attempts to resume work again, he was forced to come to the conclusion that it was impossible for him to carry on in command of the battalion, although he was very desirous of being of assistance in any way he possibly could.

We were fortunate enough at this time to be able to get the help of Lieut.-Colonel H. W. Cobham, who was at the moment out of a job, having been doing staff work at Blackpool. The chance was a very lucky one, and I shall always look back to very many happy days spent with him, both in England and in France. His merit was bound to be recognised, and he was, after about a year in France, promoted to be a Brigadier-General. The combination between him and Bracken was a most excellent one, and the 20th Battalion, some months younger than the others, made rapid strides and before long caught up the other battalions. It must be recognised, whilst saying this, that it was to a certain extent due to the assistance which had been given to them by these other battalions, so that all can take the credit of bringing on these youngest of our brothers.

The suggestion was made, and had the cordial support of the Commanding Officer of each of the battalions, and not only them but other officers, non-commissioned officers and men, that, owing to the unique way in which the battalions had been formed, that they should be allowed to wear the Stanley crest, or as it was always called in after days, "The Bird," as their badge. This required the sanction of the War Office and the approval of His Majesty. A request that this should be allowed was put forward, and the following letter was received :—

" Buckingham Palace,

" 14th October, 1914.

" His Majesty is only too glad to give his approval to the three City Battalions (The King's (Liverpool) Regiment) wearing as their badge Lord Derby's crest.

" Yours very truly,

" STAMFORDHAM."

The following quotation is taken from one of the Liverpool papers :—

" Stanley Crest.

Unique Honour for Comrades.

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King's Appreciation of Lord Derby's Work for the Army.

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His Lordship's Gift.

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The very gratifying announcement—not only to Lord Derby, but to the City of Liverpool—was made to-day of a unique honour bestowed by King George upon the noble and historic house of Stanley.

Everyone must be aware of the arduous part Lord Derby has played in organising men in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal, and it is in recognition of this work that His Majesty has given his permission that the three Comrades' Battalions formed in the city shall wear as their badges Lord Derby's crest.

To mark his appreciation of the honour which King George has thus conferred upon him, his Lordship will present the crest in silver to every man in the battalion as a memento of the unique and historic occasion. The news was first made known to-day by Colonel Stanley, Commander of the Battalions and Lord Derby's brother (who visited the men quartered at Prescot, Hooton and Sefton Parks) in the following address :—

‘ The Barracks, Prescot,  
‘ October the 16th, 1914.

‘ You will all know how it came to be that these Battalions, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, were formed, and I have no hesitation in saying that it was greatly due to Lord Derby, who initiated the idea of these battalions of friends.

‘ It gives me more pleasure than I can say, and I am sure that you will feel the same, when I tell you that His gracious Majesty, King George, has recognised this fact and has given his permission that these three City Battalions shall wear as their badges Lord Derby's crest.

‘ You will no doubt all the more appreciate this mark of favour when I re-call to you that we are members of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

' This crest was last borne in battle some 260 years ago, and now we are called upon to bear it once more.

' Every man in Lancashire will have heard tell of the gallant defence of Lathom, and let the same spirit imbue us to fight to the last for our King and country. Loyalty is foremost in our minds, coupled with *esprit de corps*.

' This will be our badge, and in times of hardship and danger may it re-call to us that we are Lancashire men.

' I have informed Lord Derby of His Majesty's mark of favour, and he has claimed it as his privilege to present to each man his badge in silver.

' It only rests with us now to prove to His Majesty that we have been worthy of conveying this compliment to Lord Derby by fighting without flinching to retain it, and hand it down with pride and honour to our successors and to theirs after them.'

When the Colonel had finished speaking the ' Comrades ' responded with rounds of cheers for the King, Lord Derby and Lord Stanley, the men being hugely delighted with the distinction conferred upon them by their king."

This distinctive mark at that time was very highly appreciated, and not only was it so at that time, but it has continued, and will continue, until the end.

Lord Derby, in accordance with the privilege that he had claimed, presented all the men who had joined up with one of these badges in silver. This was to be given only to those who had enlisted at that time, and was to be a mark that they were one of the " originals."

Any subsequent ones were to be in bronze. This rule has been most rigidly abided by, in spite of numerous requests for the silver badges. Letters soon came in, asking if the silver badges can be purchased ; but there is no breaking of this rule. It may be taken as a compliment to us that when the Division, after it had arrived in France, had to have a badge, they discarded the one which had been set aside for them and adopted ours.

Christmas that year at Knowsley was a very cheery time, and apart from the fact that I suppose all the fellows wanted to be in their own homes, they really did enjoy themselves very much. I well remember about the first performance I saw Billie Bray and his gang of Optimists give was in Prescot Barracks, and it was as good then as it is now, and that is saying a good deal.

On Saturdays there used generally to be a shooting party at Knowsley, and Lord Derby always welcomed any men who liked to come out and beat. It got to become quite a regular thing, and the fellows used to enjoy themselves very much. They used to have a good day's sport, and generally went off loaded with a hare each. A pleasant little recreation to a hard week's training.

Just before the Brigade left Knowsley for Grantham Lord Derby entertained the whole of the officers of the Brigade to a dinner in Liverpool, and a real cheery time we had. This was repeated at a later date in quite a different place, and will be mentioned in due course.

The time had come, *i.e.*, the end of April, 1915, when we were to take another step in our military life. We were growing very fast in those days and becoming

quite strong, healthy children. The next step was that the 30th Division, composed of the 89th, 90th and 91st Brigades, was to be collected at Grantham for training as a Division—the whole to be under the command of Major-General W. Fry, C.B. Before we left, the following letter was received from General Sir Henry McKinnon, Commander-in-Chief of the Western Command :—

“ 28th April, 1915.

“ My dear Stanley,

“ On the departure of your Brigade from my Command, I must write and say how much gratified I have been by the exemplary conduct of the non-commissioned officers and men, and also by the earnest endeavours which have been made by all ranks to make themselves fit for the front.

“ Coming, as they did, from very comfortable surroundings, and having their first experience of soldiering at the worst time of the year and in a very wet winter, one could hardly have expected that they would take so kindly to their new life.

“ The shortage of rifles, too, has been disheartening for them, but all through they have shown the spirit of true soldiers, and in bidding you and your Brigade ‘God speed,’ I feel confident that they will be in every way worthy to take their places alongside the Lancashire regiments which have done such splendid service in France.

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ HENRY MCKINNON.”

These words from such a fine soldier were indeed most welcome. On April the 30th, we left by train

for Grantham, and there is no question about it, we all felt somewhat nervous about this fresh chapter in our life.

**"THE 'COMRADES.'**

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**DEPARTURE FOR GRANTHAM.**

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**Farewell to a Splendid Brigade.**

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**Yesterday's Stirring Scenes.**

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The Brigade of 'Comrades' left Prescot and Knowsley yesterday for Grantham, there to complete the training which had already converted some five thousand fine young men of Liverpool's middle classes into a magnificent body of soldiers. They were given a stirring send-off and there was little doubt of the pleasure they found in thus at last making a further move in what they believe to be the right direction.

It was hard to believe that the khaki men who entrained at Prescot Station yesterday were but a few short months ago complete strangers to military life and work. But the Liverpool 'Comrades,' or, as they are officially known, the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Service Battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, joined the colours in response to Lord Derby's inspiring appeal, with the set determination of making themselves fit for the most arduous military work that might fall to the lot of any patriot to perform. That is why, when they departed yesterday to complete their course of training ready for service in France—or Germany as the case may be—they looked so wonderfully fit.

Liverpool has now despatched for the service of King and Country a brigade of splendid men who are sure to give a good account of themselves when they do—as Lord Derby has promised them they will—‘have a whack at the Germans.’

As befitted the occasion, there were enthusiastic scenes at the departure of the Brigade. Great crowds assembled at the station gates, where a clear avenue was maintained by a number of mounted police. Friends from Liverpool went out by train and motor car to cheer on the ‘Comrades’ and wave the inevitable symbol of patriotism, the miniature flag, as the boys swung past with a fine martial swing. But the soldiers, splendidly disciplined as they are, were outwardly unmoved by this display of affection and admiration. When they were brought to ‘at ease’ outside the station, however, they responded to the greetings in various ways and even relaxed from their strict military deportment so far as to wave their hats to the cinema operators to show what the spirits of the Liverpool ‘Comrades’ really are. In the midst of this little interlude one man was heard to exclaim in a vigorous voice: ‘Will we win?’ Instantly came the reply from two or three hundred throats in the vicinity, ‘Rather.’ The crowd enjoyed this immensely and accorded the men and their sentiment a further cheer.

In the station all was strict discipline again. Under the guidance of Major Packman, the Transport Officer, the officers of the ‘Comrades’ carried out the work of entraining with remarkable smoothness and despatch. In all there were about eight trains to convey the 4,000 odd men to their new camping

town, each train taking half a battalion. Being sent off hourly, the last battalion had left Prescot by two o'clock in the afternoon, the first having departed at 6 a.m.

It was characteristic of the man that Lord Derby, whose fine patriotism and initiative resulted in this magnificent contribution from civilian Liverpool to the British Army, should be one of the first to arrive at the station. Accompanied by his brother, Brigadier-General Ferdinand Stanley, who is in command of the 'Comrades' Brigade, his Lordship was on the platform as early as half-past five. Later in the morning they were joined by General Sir Henry McKinnon (in charge of the Western Command), and there was no doubt by the countenances of these three distinguished gentlemen that Liverpool has every reason to be proud of the men who have volunteered and prepared themselves for active service since the war broke out. At mid-day Lord Derby was again at the station, this time accompanied by Lady Derby, to see the 17th Battalion, who have been stationed at Prescot, depart. As the train steamed out of the station salvo after salvo of cheers were given for the head of the house of Stanley, whose crest the 'Comrades' have the honour to wear on their caps. There was something more in these cheers than the mere ebullition of feeling. They represented in the most practical way in which they could the thanks of the 'Comrades' to Lord Derby for the facilities this famous 'recruiting sergeant' has given to them to show their devotion to King and Country.

Also on the platform, it should be mentioned, were representatives of the St. Helens and District

Hospital (The Tower), Rainhill, which has dealt with over 100 sick men from the battalion stationed at Prescot. These ladies were Mrs. Jackson (Commandant of the Hospital), Sister Evans (the Lady Superintendent), Mrs. Rawlins (the Quartermaster), and Nurse Jackson.

There seemed to be a splendid spirit of *camaraderie* between the officers and men of the 'Comrades.' It was particularly noticeable when one of the troop trains was about to depart in the early forenoon. It appears that while a full brigade of over 4,000 men is destined for Grantham, there remains behind what may be called a dépôt battalion of 1,200 men, which stands as a reserve battalion. It is a great disappointment to many of the officers and men to be detained here instead of moving towards the front. Those who are gone to Grantham are also missing many good officers who have been transferred to the Reserve Battalion. Yesterday morning a train was about to depart, and the usual exciting exchanges and salutation between the soldiers and those seeing them off was taking place, when a Lieutenant entered the station to deliver a message to an officer on the train. As he went along the platform loud cheers greeted him from the men in the train, and these cheers were taken up the whole length of the station when it was seen the particular Lieutenant was the object of the effusive greeting. He was one of the officers who had been transferred to the reserves, and this severance was evidently very greatly felt by the men. The Lieutenant acknowledged the greeting of the boys by waving his hand to them as though they were particular chums, as indeed they appeared to be, rather than subordinates.

Brigadier-General Stanley was all smiles as he walked up and down the platform, fraternising freely with the men in the train. He had a word here and there with the boys in khaki. Puffing away at his pipe he passed a joke with the men, and while always respectful, they seemed to appreciate very keenly the friendly spirit he showed to all of them. In this way he went the whole length of the train, and there was not a single man of the thousand who had not thus afforded to him an opportunity of having a word with his General.

That is the remarkable characteristic of this wonderful brigade. The officers and men are going out to fight shoulder to shoulder. They are not only officers and men ; they are friends and brothers.

Taking a favourable opportunity, our representative had a chat with General Stanley, who, while modestly declining to offer any criticism upon his men, assured our representative that he was very proud of them, and he added :—‘ I feel sure that they will prove themselves a great credit to the City of Liverpool. Personally I am immensely proud of them. They have got themselves into fine fighting form in a very short time, and I look upon them as a valuable lot of soldiers.’

The men were in excellent spirits and greatly enthusiastic over the prospect of getting a step nearer to the common enemy. It would have been a tonic to any person afflicted with depression in these dreadful days to see the delight of the ‘ Comrades ’ to be released from the toil of training for the serious business which led them to enlist. The train loaded with khaki troops was an inspiring picture. Every window

was crowded with heads and shoulders and radiant faces of men, whose patriotism brought them in the first tense moments of the war to offer all they had to their King and Country. And they have not regretted the step they have taken. That was clearly indicated by their great enthusiasm on departing for Grantham.

They laughed and joked with rare spirits ; they cheered and sang with gusto, and they waved hats and handkerchiefs to the watching and admiring crowds held at bay by mounted police outside the station. Behind this display of jauntiness and glee one might have wondered what were the true feelings, how the heart was beating within the breasts of these men who had turned their backs upon the peaceful avenues of commerce for the bloodstained field of battle to face the most unscrupulous foe the world has ever seen. It was not because there could be any doubt upon the point that our representative sought to ascertain the feelings of the 'Comrades' now that their ambition to fight was nearer realisation than it had ever been. 'We are ready for anything and anybody,' one of these bright-eyed lads declared, and his colleagues in the carriage gave their 'Hear, hear' endorsement very promptly. 'Nobody can tell how glad we are to be on our way to the front at last, because that is what we hope it means to leave our camp at Knowsley. We have had a grand time there, but we have had to work jolly hard. However that is the penalty we have to pay if we are to have the opportunity of fighting the Germans. We have worked hard, and we are as fit as a fiddle, and, as I said before, ready for the Germans.'

'Have you got a good-bye message for Liverpool?'

'Yes, rather,' was the quick reply. 'Tell them through the *Courier* that if we get the chance we will do our best to increase the reputation of Liverpool's soldier sons. We are only new at the game, but we intend to prove we are as willing to serve the country as any men breathing.' "

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CHAPTER VII.

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OUR NEW QUARTERS. THE 30TH DIVISION.  
ITS COMMANDER—HIS STAFF, AND OUR NEW  
FRIENDS. TRAINING. "COOK'S TOURS" TO  
FRANCE. OUR MOVE TO SALISBURY PLAIN.

It was the first time that we were being put alongside of other troops and we did not know quite what our level really was. I can confidently say that we had no reason for being ashamed of ourselves—in fact the very reverse. We soon tumbled to what our relative value was. On the whole, I think that General Fry was very appreciative of all the training which had been done before he assumed command, and that, instead of finding an absolutely raw body, he found one that was in a very fairly high state of efficiency.

We went into huts at Belton Park, the property of Lord Brownlow, and I cannot say that our change of quarters was one for the better. The huts were good, but the water supply was practically of a negligible quantity; and as for the drainage, well this subject had better be left out. The water supply was really terrible and was the subject of daily complaints from all of us. The whole camp, which accommodated some 12,000 men, was fed by one one-inch pipe, so it is easy to see that we, who lived at the far end of the camp, got very little water.

The poor old Camp Quartermaster used to simply dread our daily grumble. I remember his writing to me and saying: "Can you give me any reason for these

daily complaints?" The only answer he got was: "Ours not to reason why. Ours but to wash—or try." Poor old man; he was not accustomed to such levity, and that straw fairly broke his back.

Every effort was made to improve this, but even at the time we left, some four months later, the whole thing was very bad. The camps had been in a shocking state all through the winter, and our predecessors had left plenty of rubbish for us to work on. This was our first experience of taking over a camp from anybody else, and invariably it has been the same thing—that the outgoing people leave everything in a filthy state for the incoming people to clean up. I dare say the same charge has been laid at our door scores and scores of times, but it is not for want of trying to get rid of this charge, and we certainly did get pretty good about handing over billets.

We first met at Grantham several people and several bodies of troops which have been our staunchest friends all through. First and foremost was General Fry himself, the kindest and most genial of Commanders, a real white man and a real good soldier. In after days, in France, we got to thoroughly appreciate his value and be grateful to him for the training which he gave us at Grantham and afterwards at Salisbury. Then we also made the first acquaintance of Colonel Stanley Clarke and Major Corfield. Both of these remained with the Division until the present time, and we cannot be sufficiently grateful to them for all the splendid work that they have done, not only for the Brigade, but for the Division as a whole. The 90th Brigade was commanded by General Westropp and the 91st Brigade was commanded by General Kempster. Both of these



**Brig.-Gen. F. C. STANLEY.**



brigades consisted entirely of Manchester troops, and our relations with them were of the most friendly nature added to a good honest feeling of rivalry, which is the best thing that one can have. General Westropp was unfortunately not to remain long with the 90th Brigade, owing to his health, and he was succeeded by General Steavenson. It was a happy day indeed when we first made the acquaintance of our real good friends the 11th South Lancashire Regiment (Pioneers), the majority of whom had come from St. Helens. From that day to the present we have always been the staunchest of friends. We one and all had the greatest admiration for them at all times, and richly did they deserve it. Whether at work or at fighting, they have been absolutely grand. Our Engineers also joined the Division at that time, and with them came our old friend, Colonel Panet. The best I can say about him is that we were as fond of him as he was of us, and that is saying a good deal.

With all our military training, our spiritual welfare was not overlooked, and one of the best came to us in the form of Canon Linton-Smith, of Blundellsands. He came as no stranger to us, as he was known to many of our lads in private life and all had a good word for him, and these sentiments increased so long as he was with us, and that was for many, many months. In France he was a tower of strength, and always to be found in the most dangerous places doing much more than attending to his work.

Our training at Grantham went on in much the same way, but on rather a bigger scale. Instead of working simply by battalions, we worked more by brigades, and eventually by division as a whole. We

also were beginning to be taken more notice of in the way of getting rifles and transport. When it came to shooting on the range, the training of the 18th Battalion under Colonel Trotter in this respect very soon proved its value, as they were undoubtedly far and away the best battalion with the rifle. This was most useful to the other battalions, as setting them a standard to which they could attain with trouble and care, and the whole of the shooting of the brigade was, by reason of this standard, raised to a much higher level than other brigades of the New Army.

The training of our transport was not without its difficulties. We had very few men who had been accustomed to horses and still fewer who had been accustomed to mules. The result was the creation of many most difficult situations from which at times our gallant transport riders had great difficulty in extricating themselves and others whom they had implicated in the mess. However, it all worked out well eventually, and by the time we left Grantham our transport was quite fair. At all events we thought it fair at that time; I don't suppose we should think so now.

As regards field days, Belvoir Park was perhaps our best hunting ground, and very many amusing and interesting days were spent there. It is impossible, in these pages, to tell the hundred anecdotes that one might, but I cannot help re-calling the incident which occurred in our first field day under our Divisional Commander. All was going well, and the Divisional Commander, in his car, was coming round, when a figure emerged and stood waving his arms in the middle of the road. This was our worthy friend, Captain Higgins. The Divisional Commander, having been

stopped in this way, got out of his car and asked what was the matter. Whereupon, Captain Higgins said to him, "I am sure you would like to know what we are doing, and so I stopped you for that purpose." It was a strange way of greeting one's inspecting officer, but at the same time the result was that not only was the Divisional Commander extremely pleased, but it made firm friends of those two for the remainder of the time when they served together.

I remember this day as being one of my most anxious ones, as to how we should emerge from the ordeal ; but all went well, and by now one's confidence was increasing by leaps and bounds. We really did begin to think ourselves fine soldiers.

There seemed at this time, and, in fact, through the whole of our period of training, a sort of craze for inspections, and I should think we were, without exception, the best inspected people in the whole country. It was first one and then another. The principal one at this period was Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Murray. By this time inspections had no terror for us—in fact it was part of our every day routine. The result, therefore, was good. Just before we left Grantham we were joined by our Divisional Artillery, but the time now was so short with them that we hardly had any opportunity of getting to know them at all. We little knew what admiration we should have for them in the future.

I now do not mind confessing that we thought that our departure for France—a thing that we all longed for—was being delayed by this branch of the service, but within a very short time we were to be extremely proud of them.

It was the finest spirit that can possibly be imagined, to see the way in which we admired our gunners, and I believe that feeling was heartily reciprocated. We always had the utmost confidence in their shooting.

It was during this time at Grantham that we got our first taste of France, because the Division was ordered to send out a certain number of officers on a "Cook's Tour" to the front, so as to learn as much as possible of the conditions which existed there. This party consisted of the Divisional Commander and some members of his staff, the Brigade Commanders and the Brigade Majors. Subsequently the Battalion Commanders were sent out for the same purpose. These "Cook's Tours" were a most excellent institution, and one was able to glean a very considerable amount of first-hand information; and on our return we were able to convey it to our respective brigades and battalions.

Again, during this time at Grantham, our whole life was not spent entirely in military work, but we also went in for sports and such-like amusements. This we have gone on with, and rather made a speciality of, during the whole of our soldiering, and have found it of the utmost advantage throughout.

The 18th Battalion were at this time a most extraordinary battalion. They used to specialize on a particular subject and, under the guidance of their Commanding Officer, used always to succeed. At this time they went in for long distance running, and when we had a cross-country run—a competition between the battalions—it was surprising what the result of their training had been in this respect. With the exception of the first two or three places, they supplied practically all the rest. On the other hand, the 17th

Battalion were equally curious. If a thing interested them and they wanted to do it well, they couldn't be beat; but if they didn't care about it, no power on earth would make them take the least trouble about it. It was just one of their characteristics.

I must not pass by this time without referring to a visit which was paid us by the Bishop of Liverpool —father of several sons who have done magnificently in this war, counting amongst the distinctions they had gained the unique trophy of a V.C. and bar. His presence amongst us was very much appreciated by all our Liverpool men and had a great and most inspiring effect on them.

Just about this time we suffered a loss by reason of Colonel Gosset having to give up command of the 19th Battalion. I want to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude for his loyalty and keenness throughout. Many a man in his position and with his seniority might have felt aggrieved at having somebody much junior put over him to command the Brigade, but such small feelings were very far apart from him, and I remember well that about the first congratulations I had came from him. There was no doubt he took a wise step in recognising the fact that years were creeping on, and from all that one has seen afterwards it has been brought home to one that age does stand very much in the way. Major Denham, who had been second in command to Colonel Gosset, then took over command of the Battalion.

And now, at the beginning of September, 1915, came another epoch in our military life. Our move to Salisbury Plain, which we all knew was to be the last step before we went across the water. We left Grantham

with mixed feelings. We were all longing to get out to France and take our share, but we could not help feeling a tinge of very genuine regret at having to leave a place where we had been so happy for the last four months—a happiness to which both Lord and Lady Brownlow so largely contributed by their kindness and hospitality.

Our parting with them was of a very sad description, they knowing full well that there were many amongst us whom they would never see again. Alas ! the losses were not only to be on that side, and we have now to look back on Lady Brownlow as a memory of the past —the memory of a charming lady with the kindest of hearts.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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LIFE AT LARKHILL. TRAINING. FINAL  
INSPECTION. THE START FOR FRANCE.  
FORMATION OF THE COMFORTS FUND.

With our move to Salisbury to Larkhill Camp we were gradually getting out of our homely life and becoming more and more a military force. Our camps were perhaps more efficient, but at the same time not so comfortable, and our life altogether became a much more military one. We came under the eagle eye of General Sir Arthur Paget and had to put our best foot foremost with a vengeance. I am happy to think that at the end of our period of training at Salisbury Plain he expressed his high approval of the state of the Division. Our work down there was perhaps more strenuous than it had been at Grantham, but I must say this for all those under whom we served that their one object was to give us every assistance possible in fitting ourselves for active service, and with that knowledge our burden was considerably lightened.

There were funny sides to even the military part of our life, and I cannot help recalling a terrible night attack on which we were unwise enough to embark. I was ambitious in those days, and had arranged a most elaborate advance and assault in which the whole Brigade was to take part.

Needless to say the night was as dark as pitch (it always is when the operation is not successful) and our difficulties were somewhat increased when we got

mixed up with the Manchesters, who were doing the same thing. Many were the tales of woe that night—perhaps Denham's was the saddest, seeing that he nearly had his head cut off by getting mixed up in his own telephone wire.

We started off a splendid Brigade, but by the time we reached our objective in the small hours of the morning there were only about a dozen who survived the ordeal.

I went over the ground the next morning in daylight and it was for all the world as if a battle had taken place there. Every battalion had sent out their salvage parties to pick up the debris which had been left behind.

It was indeed a lesson to us not to try elaborate schemes at night, but many has been the laugh over this episode, although at the time I was dreadfully worried over it.

The time was now rapidly approaching when we were to go across the water. The rest of our time at Salisbury was to a certain extent uneventful. We had to go through our usual routine of inspections, but beyond that nothing much. As is always the case in these circumstances the first sign of our being really got ready to go abroad was that they hurled all sorts of impedimenta of war at our heads, and every kind of military store was poured on us during these last few days. The one inspection that we had been looking forward to was unfortunately denied us. I think it had been a rule with His Majesty that he would inspect all Divisions of the New Army before they went abroad. This inspection of us was to have taken place on the 3rd November, but unfortunately His Majesty had met with his accident over in France just prior to that date, and as a result was laid up and it was impossible

for him to come and see us. This was a great disappointment to all, but the inspection was taken by Lord Derby in his place, and as he was the founder of practically the whole Division, the choice was no doubt a happy one. The following message was received from His Majesty the King, dated 3rd November, 1915 :—

“ Officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 30th Division.

“ On the eve of your departure for active service I send you my heart-felt good wishes. It is a bitter disappointment to me that, owing to an unfortunate accident, I am unable to see the Division on parade before it leaves England, but I can assure you that my thoughts are with you all.

“ Your period of training has been long and arduous, but the time has now come for you to prove on the field of battle the results of your instruction. From the good accounts that I have received of the Division I am confident that the high traditions of the British Army are safe in your hands, and that with your comrades now in the field, you will maintain the unceasing efforts necessary to bring this war to a victorious ending. Good-bye and God speed.

“ GEORGE R.I.”

This letter from His Majesty was much appreciated, but we were all much disappointed that he could not be there in person to wish us good-bye.

On October 31st orders were received for us to be prepared to move, and immediately afterwards our executive orders arrived, much to the delight of all. It had been a long period of training, and often doubts

were expressed as to whether we should get out at all before the war was over. It is rather laughable to look back on our anxiety at that time. We need really have had no fears on that score. Still, it was very galling to us, who had been formed so early and who had given such general satisfaction, to find that battalions who had been formed much later and whom, I am sure, could not be half as good, were sent out in front of us. Everybody had been really very patient, but there was no doubt about it, there was a very considerable feeling of annoyance all through the Brigade—still further than that, all through the Division.

However, the time had come now, and our first step was to send the Staff Captain, Captain Torrey, and a small party over to France on November 1st, whilst we followed later. Just before we left, the following letter was received from Lord Derby, dated 4th November, 1915 :—

“ I hated saying good-bye to you and your Brigade to-day, and yet I know the one thing you have all been longing for is to get to the front. I feel as if every member of your Brigade was one's own personal friend, for you know the deep interest I have taken in them from the morning when we stood on the steps of St. George's Hall seeing the recruits pour in, till to-day when as trained men they are on the eve of departure. I know how splendidly they will do and how rapidly they will earn for themselves a reputation second to none. This war is only going to come to an end by killing Germans, and I am perfectly certain that at that game the 89th Brigade will more than hold their own.

" Will you wish every officer and man from me good luck and a safe return ? "

The above letter was sent found to all four battalions.

But the last thing that we did before leaving for France was what has proved to us of the greatest value throughout.

Mrs. Stanley was put in orders to arrange for a Committee to deal with comforts for us after we had left the country. At that time naturally the powers that be were not so fitted to supply clothing, etc., to the troops as they have become subsequently, although even at that time the arrangements were wonderful. It was necessary, therefore, and also the friends at home of those who had gone out desired to do something for the men.

Immediately after our departure, Lady Derby, as President, and Mrs. Stanley set to work to form their Committee, and to raise funds an appeal was put in the papers, and the result was even better than could possibly be expected. Not only have they always fallen in with any requirements that were asked for, but they have even done better than that, and in numerous cases they anticipated our requests.

#### **"COMFORTS FOR THE 'PALS.'**

#### **Lady Derby's Appeal.**

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To the Editor of the *Courier*.

Sir,

The 'Pals' Brigade having gone on active service, we, the undersigned, are very anxious to collect various comforts to send out to them from time to time.

We want to raise a fund, to be called 'The City Battalions' Comforts Fund,' and a Committee has been formed to purchase the many articles required and to organise the distribution of them, so that all the four battalions will be treated equally. The Government supplies all absolute essentials, but there are comforts and luxuries not so provided which, we feel certain, the Liverpool people would like to send to their special Brigade in the New Army.

The fund will be urgently needed to ensure our being able to send out whatever is required in large quantities to the whole Brigade. Our Committee will work in conjunction with the Brigadier-General and the Battalion Commanders in France, who will advise us as to the requirements of their men. We shall shortly publish in the newspapers a list of articles which will be both useful and acceptable.

We appeal to all who are interested in the welfare of the 'Pals' to send their donations to the Hon. Mrs. Ferdinand Stanley, Knowsley, Prescot, by whom they will be most gratefully acknowledged.

Yours, etc.,

Alice Derby (President).

Alexandra Stanley (Chairman).

Knowsley, Prescot, November 21st, 1915."

From that time till now, these devoted ladies and gentlemen of the Committee have worked incessantly for the welfare and comfort of our men, and in order to give an idea of what they have done, I insert the following list of articles which they have sent out to us from that time up till March, 1918.

List of Comforts sent to France to the four City Battalions between November, 1915, and March, 1918 :—

Socks (pairs) ..	..	..	..	..	29,121
Towels ..	..	..	..	..	4,320
Mittens (pairs) ..	..	..	..	..	6,444
Mufflers ..	..	..	..	..	4,681
Comfort Bags ..	..	..	..	..	7,999
Tommy's Cookers and Refills ..	..	..	..	..	10,800
Cases of Sweets ..	..	..	..	..	12
Tins of do. ..	..	..	..	..	3,330
Vaseline (tins) ..	..	..	..	..	5,220
Vests ..	..	..	..	..	8,870
Shirts ..	..	..	..	..	2,181
Cases of Candles ..	..	..	..	..	29,616 lbs.
Oatmeal ..	..	..	..	..	688 lbs.
Soap ..	..	..	..	..	526 lbs.
Do. (tablets) ..	..	..	..	..	3,940
Handkerchiefs ..	..	..	..	..	14,346
Games ..	..	..	..	..	310
Packs of Cards ..	..	..	..	..	326
Tooth Brushes ..	..	..	..	..	2,933
Shaving Brushes ..	..	..	..	..	1,852
Foot Powder (tins) ..	..	..	..	..	2,189
Cigarettes ..	..	..	..	..	49,950
Newspapers and Magazines ..	..	..	..	..	52,044
Pipes ..	..	..	..	..	810
Books ..	..	..	..	..	2,370
Bootlaces (pairs) ..	..	..	..	..	4,874
Cake ..	..	..	..	..	1,683 lbs.
Periscopes ..	..	..	..	..	160
Folding Lanterns ..	..	..	..	..	300
Mouth Organs, Whistles ..	..	..	..	..	1,860

Thousands of smaller articles, including face-clothes, soup tablets, cocoa tablets, pencils, writing pads, safety pins, boot nails, bachelor's buttons, footballs, cardigans, were also sent out.

As we, the Brigade, out in France, so they, in Liverpool, were a most happy band of workers, all

pulling together and working in the most united way for the good of their cause. In these early days their work was simply for the comforts of the men who were fighting, but later on it became necessary for them to undertake the care of those in the 89th Brigade who had unfortunately become prisoners of war, and this has been an enormous extra tax both on their work and also on their resources. Their best reward has been in the fact that they know that they have the most sincere gratitude of all the men who have served in the 89th Brigade. This has been told them many times, but it does not lose by repetition. We have only had one opportunity of expressing to them in a tangible form our gratitude, and that was when the Officers, N.C.O.'s and men of all the Battalions joined together this last Christmas, 1917, in giving each of the members of the Committee a little reproduction of our badge in gold, with bars for each year of service in which they have been connected with the City Battalions' Comforts Fund.

And now the time had come for us to cross the water and embark on the Great Adventure—at last, after over a year of strenuous training. Our subsequent doings will be taken from a journal which I have kept throughout. Of course this will not go much into detail, except in certain instances, but will serve no doubt to remind those who were with us of the various places that we went to and the incidents which occurred to us.

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CHAPTER IX.

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OUR FIRST BILLETS. WE MOVE FURTHER UP. DAVID. ACCIDENT TO GENERAL FRY. IMPROVEMENT OF BILLETS. RE-ORGANISATION OF THE DIVISION.

We left our camp at Larkhill on November the 6th, having, as before mentioned, sent forward a small advance party to France. The entraining all worked out satisfactorily and no one was left behind. On arriving at the boat we heard that all sailings were put off because of submarines, and it was thought that we should have to be billeted in Folkestone for that night, but eventually the authorities allowed us to start. There was a little confusion when the last two boats were leaving Folkestone on account of a scare of Zeppelins, and the whole of the embarkation had to be done in the dark, no lights being permitted anywhere. We had a splendid crossing and went across as fast as we could in pairs with destroyers on either side. It really was rather fine and impressed us very much. It was amusing to look back on those early entries in the journal in which one anticipated that the war would at most last only about seven months.

By November 9th, 1915, we were settled down in most excellent billets in a beautiful part of the country. Divisional Headquarters at Ailly, Brigade Headquarters at Francieres; 17th Battalion, Bernancourt; 18th Battalion, Monfleurs; 19th Battalion, Buigny; 20th

Battalion, Pont Remy. Parts of it were very much like Amesbury, beautifully wooded, and for all the world like other parts of England.

We were living in a chateau belonging to Count \_\_\_\_\_ and his wife—a funny old couple, extremely kind and wanting to do everything for us. We did not stay here long, but were gradually pushed up nearer the fighting. Everything so far had gone splendidly. Our only casualties were two mules of the 17th and 18th Battalions, and one man of the 20th Battalion, who fell down just as they were marching off. Everybody seemed rather struck with our appearance, and we certainly did our best to keep up the good impression we seem to have created.

Our interpreter turned up in the form of Lieut. Garreau—a most charming young fellow. He was sent to us specially through the kind offices of a friend. We had rather dreaded the arrival of an interpreter, but we were most agreeably surprised when we saw him.

It had been bitterly cold and raining practically since we got in, making things rather miserable. Also, with novices at the game, our arrangements for comfort were not of the best. This improved rapidly, and there is nothing like a few wet days to find out the weak spots. We had a conference here—our first one—of all the Commanding Officers and various units attached to us, such as Train, Supplies, Signals, Field Ambulance and R.E., and had a general talk which was most useful. We all learnt more that day than we learnt in weeks of training in England. General Allenby paid us a visit here and told us it would not be long before we went into the line.

On 14th November the tripods for the Lewis guns arrived all right and were distributed to the battalions. I have not heard of anyone else having them, but General Fry strongly advised the other two brigades to get them. (This refers to tripods which we had specially made for the Lewis gun, and were practically our own invention. They were extremely useful at first, but their place was later on rather taken by the ordinary machine guns. It is interesting to know, however, that two and a half years later the authorities have adopted and advocated the use of just such a similar article for Lewis guns ; rather a feather in our cap !)

Our first casualty occurred at Port Remy when practising with live bombs. One of the men of the 20th Battalion got hit in the leg ; not badly, but it showed how beastly dangerous these things were. In spite of the weather and the novelty of their surroundings the men settled down very well indeed and were very happy.

On November the 16th we got orders to move on the next day to a part rather nearer the line, but still a long way back. Colonel Trotter had a great luncheon at his billet to meet the Mayor of the village. Table groaning with delicacies and unlike his usual mess. These Frenchmen are rum 'uns. The Mayor was told I was coming to luncheon, so he gave orders that the streets were to be properly cleaned and the mud scraped off throughout the village. It certainly was done. (The British were new to this district and I don't suppose they would do that kind of thing now). I think Colonel Trotter had me there more as an interpreter than anything else, because his French was of the quaintest—purely English with all the wrong genders.

I well remember it was a horrible march getting to our new billeting area (Mouflers) and the weather was awful ; a bitterly cold thaw and the roads covered with ice. It was an awful job getting the transport through.

The next day we moved on to the Vaux area. If the first day's march had been bad, the second was ten times worse. The roads were covered with ice and horses and mules could scarcely stand. It took us one and a half hours to get the Brigade headquarter transport up a hill about 300 yards long. Our new place, by courtesy called the chateau but in reality a villa in the village, was just like an ice-house and filthy dirty. The battalions were all billeted round and were fairly comfortable but rather crowded. By now we were getting accustomed to a somewhat roving life and soon made ourselves comfortable, and Brigade Headquarters was no exception. I recollect when we came in here nearly all the rooms were locked up and the owner was away. We stood it for one day, but the next morning it was too much. Everything was so cramped that it was really impossible. So someone—I cannot think who—quite by accident put a screw driver in the lock of a door and gave it a bang, whereupon the thing opened and later on we found quite a nice little room available. We had not been long there before a sort of caretaker, who did not live in the house, discovered it and at once set up a great wailing. The Mayor was brought in and he was told that the house was being broken down. He in turn wrote to the owner and he came from Paris to see for himself. He went all through and was quite agreeably surprised. A jolly old boy, very common, but cheery, his trade is the recognised one of manufacturer of

antiques. We asked him to lunch and everything was going swimmingly until the servants handed round something on his best plates. His face was a picture, and he then put in a mild protest. We hastened to explain that we had found them lying about and that great care was being taken of them. He somewhat ruefully pointed to chips on all of them, but we plied him with wine and that incident was passing off when the fools put some of his liqueur glasses on the table for port. By this time Seymour was in a hopeless state of giggles and could say nothing. Again feverish efforts were made and he was given far more port than we wanted to or than was good for him, when that silly ass, Torrey, upset a bottle—crash! on to one of his precious plates and broke it into pieces. This really was too much for all of us, and there was nothing to do but to laugh. To add to everything else, just at this time I saw Morrell stealing off to the door. It appeared that somebody had given it a bang and the infernal lock had fallen off. Luckily this was not noticed. He really was a very good fellow, and had been the whole afternoon trying to get the water supply of the house in order for us.

We had already very much felt the want of a motor in this country. Very often the distances between battalions and Brigade were quite considerable and it meant hours getting round. In some places it was practically impossible to do it in a day, added to which the weather was hardly conducive to riding, whereas if we had had a motor, the work for everyone would have been considerably lightened. But about this time this was to be remedied by the arrival of our friend who rejoiced in the name of "David." His real name

was a Daimler 30-horse power motor with body in exact imitation of the Government car. We called him "David" so that no motors need be referred to, because, for some unknown reason, brigadiers were not supposed to have cars, and there would have been an awful row if they had known that we had one. He was, no doubt, an anxiety to us, but we willingly put up with all that for the sake of having the use of him. How he arrived at his destination I cannot say here, but it certainly had its amusing side for those who know the history. In those days he looked splendid, and was the admiration of everybody. Later on he had a terribly war-worn appearance, but in spite of many contretemps, he and Walsh, who drove him, still went on. "David" and his doings would fill a whole book.

As usual, when we thought we were going to stop in a place for a little time, we immediately got orders to move. This was no exception, and on the 27th November we had orders to move the next day to Ribeaucourt and that area. Also, we got orders for the 20th Battalion K.L.R. to be attached to the 7th Corps for about three weeks for digging. They went to Laherliere to dig in the neighbourhood of Berles. The weather still remained bitterly cold, and it seemed that whenever we had to move it was at its worst.

Our march on the 28th November was, I think, the coldest thing I have ever experienced. Luckily it was quite fine, but the wind fairly cut through one. We all remembered that march for many, many days. As usual, after living in a place for one or two days, we got settled down and made ourselves comfortable. The men's billets were really quite fair, except the 19th Battalion at Prouville, a poor little village, and over-

crowded. The Mayor at Beaumetz was very cantankerous, and the 17th Battalion at first had considerable trouble with him, but all that improved with time. We always found that the French people resented our arrival, but after a day or so they softened towards us. Whether it was the charm of our fellows or their good English money I don't know, but it was always the same, and at the end of a week they would do anything for us.

General Fry was very complimentary on our march, both as regards the marching and the appearance of the men. One of his remarks was: "Before the war you would never have seen such fine line battalions, and when next you write to your brother, tell him that they are four of the finest battalions one could ever see."

I must say the men were splendid, and such words as these were well merited. Our losses began here, because we were told to send away Torrey to be trained as D.A.Q.M.G. He did not want to go and we did not want to send him, but that did not affect the result. We very soon found out that this sort of thing went on every day in this country.

It was a dreadful blow to us and we thought we couldn't possibly get on without him, but experience taught us, with all due respect to our Staff Captain, that in France nobody is indispensable. We were to have many more shocks of this description, and yet somehow we survived. But it had the effect of teaching us a lesson, which was always to have an understudy ready.

On the 1st December General Fry had a horrible accident. He had just left headquarters in his motor

—it was dark at the time—and as he was going along the road—an absolutely straight broad highway—some Army lorries were coming towards them. General Fry's driver apparently lost his head and went to the wrong side of the road, with the result that they crashed into the leading one and two more came into them. The result was an awful smash and General Fry got a very nasty scalp wound. It was very lucky it was no more. He was very healthy and very tough, so he made a speedy recovery and was soon with us again. Poor Hornby, his *aide-de-camp*, however, did not come off so lightly. As bad luck would have it, a small piece of glass went into his eye and he lost the sight of it. It was cruel luck and caused solely by bad driving.

Early in December we got word that we were to go on a course of instruction in trench warfare. The place chosen was opposite to Thiepval, where the trenches were, according to report, pretty bad, but not so bad as some, with all the wet weather.

About this time the Manchesters had an accident whilst practising bombing, resulting in one officer being killed and three men wounded.

We had a meeting of our Committee to deal with comforts sent out from home, and settled what we should ask for. They are all extremely grateful for what had been done for them.

In these early days in December there was a great craze for bettering billets, and I am afraid in this way an enormous amount of money was wasted. It was only right and natural that one should do one's best to improve the conditions under which the men lived, but there seemed to be a lack of method in doing this. For instance, we set to work to improve billets in the

back areas by patching up barns putting in bunks for the men to sleep on, making bath-houses, cook-houses, etc., and providing tables and forms.

This was all right provided the intention was to continue to occupy the billets, but in many cases the occupation was only a very temporary one, and when we moved on the inhabitants did not fail to benefit by the timber that had been used, and then, perhaps months after, it all had to be done over again.

At this time we were forced to become the victims of a serious form of this epidemic, and I am sure Colonel Panet, our C.R.E., will well remember the time. Of course where we were there were no materials available for turning derelict barns into garden cities, and having been much pressed by the Corps to get on with the work, we retaliated by putting it up to them to provide the necessary tools and materials.

The crisis came when the C.R.E. of the Corps had to go himself and buy up the contents of an ironmonger's shop and bring up to us a motor car full of saws, hammers, nails, etc. He then scoured the country for timber, and I remember so well we were promised two lorry loads and a pontoon waggon full of timber. We very soon learned not to expect all that had been promised with the best will in the world. On this occasion we got a waggon load of timber, most of which was the wrong size and we couldn't use it.

However, in spite of all these difficulties, we were getting pretty handy at making ourselves comfortable, and before we left our villages were much more habitable. We re-visited some of these places afterwards, and alas ! found no trace of our hard work.

It was when we were in this area that we first heard that one battalion was to be taken away from us and replaced by a battalion which had been out here sometime. It was a system which they had adopted in the XIII. Corps, by which also one Brigade was taken out of the Division and replaced by another.

On the 12th December I saw General Kempster, and he told me it had been definitely decided that his Brigade, the 91st, was to go to the 7th Division. He was very sick about it, and doubted whether he would stay on much longer. As it was left to me to select the Battalion which was to leave us, after much mental tribulation and many regrets, I decided to send Colonel Trotter's, the 18th.

The 20th Battalion were still away digging. They all seemed quite happy, but their accommodation was of the most meagre description, but that was only natural when one got nearer the line. We were later on to know Berles, where they were digging, very well.

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## CHAPTER X.

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LAST PERIOD OF INSTRUCTION. REPORTS ON  
 BATTALIONS. ORDERS FOR HOLDING OUR  
 NEW SECTOR. RETURN TO REST BILLETS.  
 RE-ORGANISATION CARRIED INTO EFFECT.  
 DEPARTURE OF 18TH BATTALION, K.L.R.  
 ARRIVAL OF 2ND BEDFORDS.

We moved forward on our course of instruction on the 16th and 17th, halting at Puchevillers for the night of the 16th. As usual the weather was of the vilest and we arrived at Engelbelmer in torrents of rain. We were met by General Lambton, commanding the Division to which we were attached.

The Brigade was broken up so as to go into the trenches for training, and only the 17th Battalion went to Engelbelmer, the others being further north.

To say the least of it, it was uncomfortable for all, and perhaps particularly for Brigade Headquarters. They did not expect a full headquarters to come up and we were eight officers living in two small rooms, in which to sleep, live and work.

We have all seen bad trenches, but these, I think, were about the limit. They were the French ones till a few months before. Then in the summer they were beautiful, dry as possible, very deep, with brick walks, etc., but in the winter, owing to their not having been revetted, they had all fallen in. The sand bags were useless, as they only rot and make the mess greater; the brick floors had altogether disappeared in the mud,

and one floundered about up to one's middle in thick coffee cream. It really was very bad, and had only one redeeming feature, which was that the Germans were supposed to be worse off.

The men, the rightful occupants, were absolutely wonderful and always cheerful under all conditions. They set our fellows a very fine example, which was not lost sight of in after days. Whilst we were there they did some artillery work on a particularly little piece of the German trench. It was our first experience of this kind and really it was most thrilling. Shell after shell, from different guns, poured into the place and must have smashed it to blazes. This went on for about three-quarters of an hour, and the Germans made no reply at all, though they must have been very annoyed.

On one day General Lambton himself very kindly took me round and we had quite an exciting time with Boche shelling, which was most unpleasant, but it was nothing to what we were all to experience later on.

During the whole time the weather was atrocious. Rain, rain every day and all day, and really it was most depressing. The worst of it was that they worked like beavers to improve the trenches from the terrible state they were in, and when you had constant rain like this they got just as bad or even worse.

The arrangements here about comfort of the men when they came out of the trenches were excellent, and our fellows learnt a great deal as to what they could expect and also what was expected of them.

On the 24th December everybody was in good spirits and hoping that the Boche would try some of the rotten fraternising on Christmas Day, as he did

the year before. They were all ready for him and he would have got fair hell if he had tried anything, but he did nothing of the kind.

In this sector we were all rather bucked because we let off about ten shells to his one—a very different thing to what it had been a few months before. This completed our final training, and we were at last fit to take our place in the line.

We came out of the line on Christmas morning, having had rather a strenuous time. I append the reports that were made on our Battalions, which were quite satisfactory, and compared very favourably with other Brigades which had preceded us :—

*Confidential.*

17th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

B.M. 830.

Headquarters,

4th Division.

I beg to forward the following report on the 17th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, lately attached to my Brigade for instruction :—

*Discipline.*—Very good. The companies and platoons were well in hand. The N.C.O.'s knew their work, and are of a good stamp, and are not afraid of asserting themselves.

The Quartermaster's department appeared good and attention had been paid to the feeding and equipment of the men.

*Military Bearing and Physique.*—Above the average.

The men were smart and intelligent.

*Sanitation.*—More attention to cleanliness in billets is required, and it must be impressed on all ranks that refuse should be at once removed and not left lying about.

I attach a report on the billets at Mesnil.

*Company Officers.*—Distinctly good and capable. They have been well trained.

*Higher Command.*—The Battalion appeared to be well commanded and were trained on right lines. My Commanding Officers report that the Battalion is fit to go into the line at once.

*March Discipline.*—Attention is required to the proper marching of small parties and keeping them closed up.

(Signed) C. B. PROWSE,  
Brigadier-General,  
Commanding 11th Infantry Brigade.

27th December, 1915.

### 11th Brigade.

Report on Billets left by the 17th King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

The barns, etc., occupied left in a rather untidy condition ; underclothing, cardboard boxes, etc., being left about, probably as the result of clothing, etc., arriving in parcels on the night prior to their departure.

The sanitary condition was fair.

(Signed) V. PRESCOTT-WESCAR,  
Captain,  
Commanding 1st Rifle Brigade.

26th December, 1915.

*Confidential.*

19th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment.  
7th Corps.

With reference to your G.S. 267 of 3rd October, the G.O's Commanding the Infantry Brigades to which the 18th and 19th Liverpools were attached report as follows :—

19th Battalion, attached to the 143rd Brigade.

*Discipline.*—Taking everything into consideration appears to be good, but the N.C.O's. do not take sufficient control over working parties, etc.

*Training.*—All ranks have shown keenness in learning their duties. On several occasions the men were paraded far too early and kept standing about before being marched off to their various duties.

The Battalion is considered above the average of those which have been attached to the Brigade from the New Army.

From what I saw of both Battalions in and about the trenches, they seemed to be satisfactory and a fine body of men, well set up and well drilled.

(Signed) R. FANSHAWE,  
Major-General,  
Commanding 48th Division.

25th December, 1915.

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*Confidential.*

20th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment.

*Officers.*—Military Knowledge, average ; Keenness, very pronounced ; Control over their men, good ; Discipline, good.

*N.C.O.'s.*—Class of N.C.O., a good class ; Military Knowledge, average ; Keenness, very pronounced ; Control over their men, good ; Discipline, good.

*Men.*—Discipline, very good for New Army ; Keenness, very pronounced ; Standard of Training, rather above the average of the New Army.

*General Remarks.*—This is certainly the best Battalion which has been sent to this Brigade for instruction. It is well commanded and has really a good tone all through. The men get through their work quickly, thoroughly and cheerfully, and all ranks are keen to learn. This should be a really good Battalion in a very short time.

(Signed) E. G. T. BAINBRIDGE,  
Brigadier-General,  
110th Infantry Brigade.

25th December, 1915.

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### VII. Corps.

Forwarded. I agree with the above. The C.O. is decidedly above the average, and good all round.

GLEICHEN, Major-General,  
Commanding 37th Division.

25th December, 1915.

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On our way out we received a letter from the Division to say that in about a week's time the 30th Division was to take over a bit of line near Maricourt and Carnoy. This had been held by the 5th Division in a curious way. It was divided into two sectors with seven battalions in one and five in another, which meant that one of our Brigades was to be split up and distributed over the other two. The unfortunate thing

was that, being the junior Brigadier, our Brigade was the one to be split up. I went to see General Fry about it and found him extremely nice, and just as worried as I was. He had been down to see whether other arrangements could not be made, but they told him that this was impossible. He was most complimentary about the Brigade and said he would do everything he could to help us. It was a great disappointment, but there it was.

We received a letter from the Corps Commander saying he had been told to inspect our Lewis gun tripods with a view to their possibly being adopted for the army. Rather a feather in our cap! During our tour of instruction in the trenches we had one officer wounded, one man killed and four wounded—very light casualties considering that they came in for quite a nice bit of shelling.

We moved back to our old quarters at Ribeaucourt and the neighbourhood, and the 18th Battalion now left us. It was very sad parting with them after we had been together for such a long time, and we all missed them very much indeed. However, we were not going to be entirely separated from them, as they were only going to the 21st Brigade, and remained in the 30th Division. The 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, under Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, came in their place and immediately I was extremely favourably impressed. All the officers that I saw seemed an extremely nice lot, and all reports of the Battalion were excellent.

My first introduction to them was on arriving back at Ribeaucourt, where we found them already installed. I had been without food since the early morning and we had none in our mess. Seymour said to me: "I

advise you to go to the Bedfords. They will do everything they can for you." There never were truer words spoken than those. During the whole time they were with us they have kept up to these remarks, and at all times and in all places they have been splendid, and on all occasions we found them most willing and anxious to do everything to help.

On the 29th December I inspected the Bedfords and was very much impressed by all I saw. I had to say a few words of greeting to them which made me about as shy as it was possible to be, seeing that we were quite new hands at the game and they had been out since the beginning of the war. They naturally rather resented being taken out of such a magnificent Division as the 7th, but they had, one and all, made up their minds to get over that, and it was not long before we got to know each other. This commenced a very happy period stretching over more than two years, which I am indeed glad to say they have called the happiest time they have had in France.

The Corps Commander, General Congreve, came round during this stay at Ribeaucourt and inspected our billets. He was very nice indeed and said he was quite satisfied with all that he had seen. We also had a visit from the Commander of the Fourth Army, General Sir H. Rawlinson, who was very appreciative of our efforts.

We got a telegram from the Third Army asking for a sketch and description of our tripods for the Army Commander.

We were gradually learning to make ourselves comfortable and to make things out of nothing. As usual in the back areas, R.E. materials were not very easy



Maj.-Gen. J. SHEA.



[Photo Swaine

Lt.-Col. H. S. POYNTZ.

to get, because the bulk of this went up to the forward area—which was only right—but given a little timber and some nails it is wonderful what can be done to improve matters.

I had not the opportunity of seeing the 18th Battalion when we came out of the line, so on the 2nd January I went to say good-bye to them at Candas. It was horrible saying good-bye to them after all the time they had been with us, but it had to be done. They were told that as regards comforts they would be looked after from home, just as if they had remained with the Brigade. They were busy preparing for their move on the next day, so there was not much opportunity of talking to them.

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## CHAPTER XI.

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### MOVE UP TO OUR OWN SECTOR. THE “QUIET” SPOT. LIFE IN THE LINE.

On the 3rd January the 17th and 20th Battalions moved to \_\_\_\_\_ on their way to the trenches. The 19th Battalion did not move till about the 8th and the Bedfordshires on the 7th. Brigade Headquarters moved with the Bedfords. Young Roxburgh, who had been our Brigade machine gun officer up till then, left for home about this time to take over a machine gun company and bring it out here. This was our first introduction to the new Machine Gun Corps, when a Company of Machine Gunners was attached to our Brigade. This was a great improvement on the system under which each Battalion had its own machine guns.

We had endless trouble with the man who owned the chateau in which we had been living. He was also the owner of practically the whole village. Just before we left he became very cantankerous and put enormous claims in for damages amounting to over 3,000 francs. They were absolutely preposterous, and the whole thing was an attempt to get money out of us and out of our Government. We resisted it for all we were worth, and I think the whole thing was settled for 200 francs. This, I believe, was nothing new.

On the 7th January Brigade Headquarters were established at Etinehem, the same place as Divisional Headquarters, with very little to do as the battalions did not belong to us, the 19th having gone to the 21st

Brigade and the others to the 90th. However, we kept in as close touch as possible, and in this we were very much helped by General Steavenson, commanding the 90th Brigade.

The weather was of the vilest. It did nothing but rain and everywhere it was a bog. The trenches in our piece were very bad and there were not even any duckboards. We buoyed ourselves up with the hope that the Germans were in a worse plight than ourselves, as they shouted from the German trench : "We are Saxons, and after the 29th you can have our trenches and the \_\_\_\_\_ Kaiser, too." This looked as if they were pretty fed up, but we did not at the time understand their reference to the 29th.

When we first took over we could take a motor right up in to Maricourt and hide it there under a wall, but it was not advisable to do it too often, because one had to pass one piece in full view of the Boche.

On the 9th January the 20th Battalion did quite a good little piece of work. The Boches came and bombed one of their posts A.P.I. They retaliated and laid out eight of them.

On the 12th January the Boches were quite fairly active and put about 200 shells on the trenches and village within the space of about half an hour. One went clean through Priestley's mess, smashing everything, wounding Smith slightly, knocking out his servant's false teeth, and other minor damages. Beyond this, we only had about three or four casualties. Coming back from Suzanne, we found that the road to the village had received some attention during the day ; in fact this was a quite unusually active day for this piece.

It was too far away for us to remain at Etinehem, so about this date we moved up to Bray and took what accommodation we could find. About the middle of January our hopes were raised that there was to be a redistribution of the line, and that each Brigade would have its own piece, but those hopes were shattered and it was to be some time yet before we came into our kingdom.

Ever since the 12th we had a pretty hard time. The shelling had been practically incessant and sometimes very heavy. It did very little damage, but was extremely annoying. The Boches, for some unknown reason, had very much woken up. For months they had done nothing and it was very quiet, but either they knew (as of course they did) that a relief had taken place and they wanted to intimidate us, or else they had got new troops opposite to us. On the 13th we were just driving up to the chateau at Suzanne when a shell came in at the gate opposite. We were all covered with earth and it blew all the windows out of the house—not at all pleasant! This was the first shell that had arrived there for many months, but from that time on they went on bombarding it. The men were very good. It had been rather alarming, but they were rapidly beginning to treat shells with contempt.

As time went on things were getting worse, and on the 17th January we were having a rotten time in this so-called quiet spot. In three days these infernal Boches had put no less than 5,500 shells into our area. People who were at Ypres said it was much more lively here than it was during their time there. However, everyone was all right and our casualties remained light, and we lived in the hope that it would soon quieten

down a little, but instead of that it seemed to go on increasing. The line had been left in a dreadful condition, but it was gradually getting better. Up till then this piece had been looked upon as a rest cure, and certainly no protection had been provided. The trenches were very bad and there were no dug-outs worthy of the name. All of the headquarters—Brigade, Battalion and Company—were without any protection at all, and this was not at all pleasant with the kind of shelling we were getting. The only thing to do was to make accommodation as soon as possible; but all that took time.

By the 20th January the shelling had been such that they had even taken to mentioning Maricourt in the official communiques. Most people, I suppose, had not the remotest idea of where it was.

Steavenson and I used sometimes to go together, and we had on one occasion a most interesting morning, looking over a bit of his line towards the Chapeau de Gendarme. We wanted to get out to the Moulin de Fargnier, but when we were just short of there we were held up by snipers. The trench was thoroughly overlooked by them and they made it extremely unpleasant for us. We tried to get on, but every time we moved they had a go at us, so we had to crawl back, and whilst we were doing this they repeated the operation.

The Boche continued to be very busy with his shelling, rather devoting his attention to the batteries in the valley with 5·9 howitzers. This piece of our line was really a horrible little salient. It was very interesting, but at the same time an unpleasant piece to hold. It was not so fashionable as Ypres, but was just as much of a salient, if not more so, than that was.

(We did not know Ypres in those days). It was all right when it was quite quiet, but now that things had livened up life here was decidedly strenuous. Maricourt itself was being constantly shelled and the valley leading up to it, and Suzanne, too, came in for plenty of attention at all times. The French were on the other side of the river and were having a very quiet time. The people who were living here before us had been living in a fools' paradise. During their time it was very quiet, but things had altered now entirely. There was an idea that the Germans, in some parts of the line, were short of ammunition and that we were top dog in artillery. They certainly exploded that idea here—whatever we might be in other places. Here they never hesitated not only to start bombardments, but when we went for them they put far more and heavier stuff over us. Although their shooting was accurate they did very little harm. For instance, they put 70 shells into a battery ; result—nil. Our men were getting quite used to this sort of thing and the shelling by the third week in January did not bother them at all.

On the 21st January Brigade Headquarters moved up to Suzanne, so as to be nearer the trenches. In view of possibilities we set to work to tunnel into the bank behind our Headquarters. There was nothing like being prepared for eventualities. Lynton Smith joined us for a bit of a rest. He had been doing too much and had nearly knocked himself up, so I did not propose to allow him to do anything for a bit. Poor man ! I am afraid it hardly came under the heading of rest as things turned out.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE FRISE SHOW.—AND SUBSEQUENT  
UNPLEASANTNESS.

From January 24th to the 27th things had been much quieter. It was a very welcome change, and it appeared as if their hate was dying down, but we were to have a rude awakening, as will be seen from the following quotation from my diary :—

“ 29th January.—Since early yesterday morning our life has been absolute hell. It was really impossible to describe it in any other way, and I am afraid it is not over yet. The shelling has been appalling and nearly all tear shells, which, if you do not put on goggles, at once nearly blinds you. Everything we have been through up till now has been child’s play compared with this.”

About midnight on the 27th-28th the Boches started shelling Maricourt very heavily indeed ; both the village and the trenches in front of it. They then gradually shifted their fire on to the batteries in the valley and they came in for a very heavy pounding. About 7 o’clock on the morning of the 28th they brought down their fire on to a battery just outside Suzanne, and then on to Suzanne village itself. This shelling was very different to what they had ever done before. It was much heavier and mostly 5·9’s. Also, they introduced a new form of torture in the shape of these tear shells.

All the morning they turned their attention on to the centre part of the village and played old Harry

there, knocking the whole place to pieces, but doing no harm to the men because they were all out of it. About mid-day, during a lull in the shelling, I went down to see Steavenson, and to find out if I could be of any assistance. I was very much relieved to find him and George, my brother Colonel Stanley, commanding the gunners, quite all right, though they had had a very nasty time. Their chateau, which had been absolutely intact up to now, got some very nasty holes in it. I came back and went up a hill close behind my Headquarters, and saw what was happening to the French, who were getting the most awful plastering you can imagine, when suddenly they evidently spotted a few men where we were and started shelling that to rights. The dug-outs which we had started came in useful for some people, but we were crowded out by artillery fellows who had bolted in there. They fairly set about our piece of the village and systematically destroyed it, and smashed in my billet and killed a horse there. Poor "David" was standing under an archway and they reduced his body to something like a pepper-pot, but, undefeated as he always is, he still worked all right. All this was with tear shells, and we spent a most miserable time. On the 28th alone the Germans are supposed to have put 20,000 shells into our area. I have not the slightest reason for doubting it.

The main show, however, was next to us, on the French, where on a front of about one and a half miles they put 35,000 shells. It was appalling! During the course of the day the Germans attacked and captured Frise, where the French had a Territorial battalion in a very outlying post. They captured the whole place and the entire garrison. Not a soul escaped, and we

do not in the least know what actually happened, except seeing the whole place a mass of smoke and flames. They must have had an awful time there. The enemy pushed on further still and things were becoming quite unpleasant for our salient at Maricourt.

The night of the 28th was extremely unpleasant. The bombardment continued very heavy and we had practically no artillery to retaliate with, and if we had there was very little ammunition. Heavy guns we had practically none, nor had the French on their piece. On the night of the 28th the French brought in a lot of artillery, evidently realising that something serious was on, and we were strengthened up in that way also. General Steavenson was perfectly splendid and no one could have been better or more calm than he was under these very trying circumstances. He was a very good example of what one should be like in a fight. On the night of the 28th I moved our Headquarters to be with General Steavenson. They had a certain amount of protection there, whereas our Headquarters was a mass of ruins and nothing else. "David" was sent away with all our spare kit, in case of eventualities.

The 29th was much the same as the 28th, and we came in for a very heavy bombardment. Luckily most of their shelling was on the village and all the men had been moved out of that, so that our casualties were really very light.

The inhabitants had, by this time, all fled and they were very sensible to do so, even though they had to leave all their household goods behind them. The French appeared to be holding the enemy in check ; anyhow he was making no headway, but our position in the salient was somewhat precarious. From where

the Germans were they could observe quite well the only road leading from Bray to Suzanne, which was our only means of feeding the troops and supplying ammunition. At any time he liked he could, with his guns, cut us off from the rest of the world. Steavenson moved one company with two machine guns to the bridge at Eclusier because, although the French were supposed to be guarding that, they had nothing there and they appealed to us for help. If the Germans got hold of that bridge our position would indeed be bad, as he could get behind our line at Royal Dragons and put out of action our guns in that particular part of the line. His main objective seemed to be Cappy.

On the 30th most of the day we had a thick mist and with the exception of about 200 shells the Boches did nothing else. This gave us an opportunity of getting things straightened up a bit in the way of telephone lines, etc. Needless to say these were cut at once, and had been out of order practically the whole time, in spite of the splendid work that the linesmen had done. As this was their first experience of heavy bombardment, one cannot speak in high enough praise of their work. Up to now the Boches had not made any attack whatsoever on our bit of the line, though it was rather thought that he was going to do so in the direction of Carnoy. However this did not materialise. Considering the tremendous bombardments our casualties had been very light, and we could consider ourselves extremely lucky.

We were very suspicious about aeroplanes and I was certain that the Germans had been using some with our markings. One of them, on the 28th at 1 o'clock, and again at 4-30, flew quite low over Suzanne, only 300 feet up, and kept on circling about the place. Every

time that it moved off that particular part was shelled. This happened constantly and everybody's suspicions were aroused. Some gunners and some of our men were on a bank when he came over. It was so suspicious that I shouted out to the men to keep absolutely quiet, but in two minutes they were pouring shells just on that place. This happened repeatedly on the 28th and 29th. Our suspicions were somewhat confirmed by the fact that a few days before an aeroplane with French markings on, after circling about, alighted just behind one of our batteries. They went off to see what he was doing and he said he had lost his way to Abbeville. This on a clear day with the river below him. That battery had not been touched before, but the next day it was heavily shelled. The people behind rather laughed at our suspicions, but we were convinced that these were Germans flying in aeroplanes with our markings.

On the 31st the French were by way of counter-attacking with a view to restoring the situation south of the river. Their object was not to re-take Frise, which they would have been quite ready to give up without any fighting, but it was very necessary that they should get back the Bois de la Vache.

On the 30th General Fry ordered the Headquarters of the 89th Brigade to move back to Etinehem, as he did not wish our Brigade staff to be up there while they had practically nothing to do, and he wanted us to be ready in case anything should happen to the 90th Brigade, so that we could take their place. It was certainly a lively experience getting out of Suzanne. The Boches elected to bombard the road just at the time we were leaving, and stampeded a lot of horses who were there. We had to put back and wait for a bit until

the shelling died down and then got away without any further incident. The staff of the 89th Brigade was ordered to reconnoitre the ground south of the river behind the French, and got out a scheme for defence in case we should be called upon to protect our right flank. By the morning of the 31st the French had moved up an enormous number of guns and the positions were being turned on the enemy. We were now able to give him just as much as he gave us—if not rather more. But we had been through a rotten time.

During all this time Maricourt and our trenches had come in for a considerable amount of shelling, but from what one could gather, after the first day it was Suzanne and the neighbourhood which came in for the largest share. I often recall the fact that the 28th of January was my birthday, and the mails which arrived with their usual punctuality, brought me letters wishing me many happy returns of the day. No, thank you! Once of that is quite enough. Also a letter came from Seymour, who was away on leave, saying: “I have a presentiment that you are having a very nice quiet time. I hope it may be so.” He was very disillusioned when he came back.

By the 4th of February the Boches were still fairly active—both on ours and the French fronts. The French made several efforts to get back their lost ground, but these were not wholly successful. However, they got back some and were gradually every day nibbling some of it back again. As regards shelling, the advantage was now rather with us, and it was no longer a question of their shelling us and our not being able to answer.

On the 7th of February we were still waiting for the French to do their attack, but they put it off day

after day, and one wondered whether they would ever do it. As it was, they had got back a bit of what they had lost, but they ought to have taken back more. Frise was unnecessary and they were not going to try for that. There were many very heavy bombardments and on each occasion everyone thought the attack was going to take place, but nothing materialised. However, on the evening of the 7th the French made a determined effort to get back the main position, but didn't succeed. The Boches then counter-attacked, and that also failed, which was satisfactory.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

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DEATH OF WAINWRIGHT. RAID ON 18TH  
BATTALION. RE-ORGANISATION OF SECTOR.  
MOVE BACK OUT OF THE LINE. WORK.

I am sorry to say that poor Wainwright was killed about this period. It was a case of real bad luck. He was coming back with five men from a course. They were only about a hundred yards from his Battalion Headquarters in Maricourt when the Boches started shelling. He shouted to his men to get into the ditch. It was dark and they went to one side of the road where there was barbed wire. If they had gone to the other there was a good trench. A shell came along and they were all hit.

Our lads had been having a very rough time, but they were all in splendid heart and were only anxious to get level with the Boches again. The Boches tried a raid on the 18th Battalion and succeeded in getting into the trenches, but they were on him like lightning and pushed him out again and made him pay dearly for it. It was a very good piece of work and they had every reason to be proud of themselves. Unfortunately, after it was all over and he was bringing his fellows back, young Charlie Adam got hit by a shell, and although his life was saved, his soldiering days were done. He was a great loss to the Battalion.

By the 21st February things had quietened down very much, but they had a bit of a go on our left—quite futile, but annoying. They also had a go at the French.

By this time the line had been re-organised and we were in possession of the piece of the line which had been allotted to our Brigade, but no sooner had this happened than all of our battalions were changed. We then had the 20th Battalion K.L.R., the Bedfords, two battalions of the Gordon Highlanders and a battalion of the Black Watch hanging about in the neighbourhood. The 17th Battalion had gone out of the line and were some way back working on the roads.

On the 26th February we were to have been relieved, but that was off and we had to remain in, but warning orders were received for the Scotchmen to be taken out of the line and the 17th Battalion were recalled in a hurry. About the first week in February the 19th Battalion were re-transferred to us from the 21st Brigade and our Brigade was reunited. I can say with confidence that we were all very happy when that took place. The actual order for the relief of the Scotchmen did not arrive till about 10-30 p.m. on the 27th, and they had to be got away before dawn. It was a devil of a business, but it worked out all right. The 17th Battalion K.L.R. had re-joined the night before.

The Boches had been rather active again—nothing like so bad as he was, but still annoying.

When we came into our kingdom the Brigade Headquarters were established at Bray.

About now two of our old friends left us—one in the shape of Stern having gone to Divisional Headquarters, and the other in the shape of Fraser having gone to work with the R.E. He had done splendid work for us, and was much more fitted for that kind of job than in the trenches.

The somewhat hurried and complicated relief went off quite all right, but it was a very anxious time. The men were very tired and the Boches rather complicated matters by shelling Maricourt about 8 o'clock in the evening. I should have liked to have given them something back, but refrained from doing so because he might have gone for us again, which would have been disastrous. As it was, we were able to bring out carts, etc., in broad daylight, in view of the Boches, and nothing happened.

Up to the 1st March we were all having a very busy time in our new sector, but everything was going on very well and we were all very happy at being united again. The Boche had tamed down very considerably by now, but he "hated" us spasmodically.

By the 6th March the 21st Brigade were out, but we did not envy them their lot. They were dotted about in tents in oceans of mud, working on the roads and various odd jobs. It had been snowing heavily, and it was simply heart-breaking to see the trenches. The men worked like slaves, and then down came some snow or rain and it was as bad as ever. However, the winter was nearly over by then—thank Heaven!

About this time I got a message from General Congreve, our Corps Commander, saying he would like to come up and go round the trenches. So off we went in a beastly snow-storm, but really had a most enjoyable time. He was a very agreeable companion, and of course in the thick snow we could go to all sorts of places one could not have thought of going to on a clear day; wandering about on top of the ground instead of ploughing through the trenches. He is a most adventurous man though, and infinitely preferred walking out

in full view and quite close to the enemy than anything else. He simply asked for trouble.

General Fry asked me to supply an officer to command the 18th Manchesters, and I sent Major Smith, the second-in-command of the 20th Battalion K.L.R., having the utmost confidence that he would do well.

On the 13th March we heard that we were to come out of the line on the 17th and move back about sixteen to eighteen miles. It was very welcome news for the men, who were very tired. The way they had done was absolutely splendid. The weather had very much improved and that worked wonders. Personally, I was very sorry to go out of the line, because I had got very much interested in our piece, and everything had been got into good working order and was going smoothly. It was rather satisfactory that the battalions said that they had never had so much engineering material sent up to them.

We handed over our trenches to the 18th Division in first-rate order—much better than they had ever been—and it was a great pleasure to compliment all the battalions on the work they had done.

On the 17th March we went to La Houssoye and the neighbourhood, and there were rumours that we should stop there a month or six weeks. But we were beginning to know too much to have much hope that this was to be our lot.

This was a very nice place, and I would not have minded stopping there for a bit. My own room was the one that was used by Von Kluck and Eitel Frederik during their advance to Paris, and they had scribbled up all sorts of things on the walls about their beastly Vaterland.

We were not far wrong in thinking that we should not for long be left in peace, because on the 22nd March we received orders to move up to Chipilly and for the battalions to dig for the 18th Division, who had taken over our piece.

This went on until the end of April. The battalions were all split up doing various jobs—digging, road-making, etc. I am glad to say that the 18th Division very much appreciated all the good work that we did up in the line. It is always satisfactory to have kind words from anybody. Certainly the way that everybody worked was excellent.

We all knew that this was in connection with our forthcoming offensive, but at that time the plan of attack was much smaller than it eventually became. The weather left a great deal to be desired—nothing but rain storms, which hampered everything considerably ; also it was very cold.

Although we were kept hard at it, we found time for some relaxation and sport, and on the 27th April we had a very good boxing competition, and it was a great treat to see the men enjoying themselves. Luckily the weather was fine on that day, which made all the difference.

We took over our bit of the line again on the 30th April. A good deal of work had been done by us and the 18th Division, but on the 3rd of May, after I had had a good look round, I find by my diary that I could not say I was very much pleased with the progress that had been made in the work since we had been out. There had been a good deal of what I call labelling, *i.e.* putting up notice-boards and saying what was going

to happen ; but considering the amount of men they had at their disposal, the result was certainly disappointing.

" David," during our time out of the line had been invaluable, and many fellows will have an affectionate remembrance of him at this time. Alas ! he had to go into retirement for a bit. Just about now certain people were a little bit too active, so we popped him away in Amiens. The weather had at the beginning of May really taken a turn and it was grand now and everything as dry as possible. This was a very good spot for the summer months. The river was quite handy and the men got plenty of bathing, which delighted them. We really were all quite glad to get back into what we looked upon as our own territory once more.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

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### PREPARATIONS FOR THE OFFENSIVE. CHANGE OF DIVISIONAL COMMANDER. TRAINING FOR THE PUSH. RETURN TO THE LINE. OUR NEW NEIGHBOURS. FINAL PREPARATIONS.

All the work in the line now was very interesting and was all brewing up for what we were looking forward to—the Big Push. There was plenty to be done and not very much time to do it in, so we were working all out and were not to be caught napping when the time came with our work undone.

On the 10th of May we had quite a good “strafe” on the Boche trenches, and at one point made a mess of them. It was the first time we had done that, and must have come rather as a surprise for them. They were very annoyed for some days and threw quite a lot of stuff about, so I hope we did them some harm.

The 12th of May was a very unhappy day for us. General Fry came round and told me that he was going to be replaced in the Command of the Division. I asked if I might see the Corps Commander on the subject, and he came round to see me. I told him that we all had the greatest confidence in General Fry and that his departure would be a great loss to the Division. This I did having previously spoken to the two other Brigadiers on the subject, and having found that they agreed entirely and were very much upset about it, but it was of no avail, and he left us.

He was a great loss to us, both individually and collectively. All the officers and men were devoted to him and we had the greatest respect for all the work that he had done since the Division was first formed. I am sure we would all have done everything we possibly could to carry out his wishes, and a leader cannot expect more than that. I am afraid he felt it very much indeed himself, but he was splendid when he told me about it—so quiet and dignified.

The Boche had been very active in the shelling way and we had a decidedly unpleasant day. On the night of the 12th they made a raid on Steavenson's trenches—at least on a part of them. Steavenson's lot had a certain number of casualties and had some prisoners taken. This is a thing which cannot be helped if the Boches put down a sufficiently good bombardment.

By this time the plot was beginning to thicken, and our progress with preparations was very noticeable. It is rather interesting to know that up till now the wearing of steel helmets had been more or less voluntary, but now, and only now, was it made compulsory. I wonder how many people would go up to the trenches without a steel helmet on—not very many. I venture to think they have saved hundreds of lives. They are certainly not a comfortable head-dress, but one soon gets used to wearing them, and very soon one does not notice them at all.

For some time past we had been running canteens for the various battalions, and these were very much appreciated by both officers and men. We supplied the goods at a small profit to cover any risks, expenses, etc., and as soon as we had collected enough profit it was re-distributed in cash to the battalions. They were

very successful up till this time, but as bad luck would have it, one of our places caught fire and we lost about £80 worth of goods. It was very unfortunate because I wanted to make a small distribution to the battalions.

On the 17th of May our new Divisional Commander arrived in the form of Major-General J. Shea, C.B. He belonged to the Indian Cavalry, then went as liaison officer to G.H.Q. He had commanded a Brigade for a short time, having previously been G.S.O. 1 of a Division, and now he came to us. He came with a great reputation. As soon as he arrived he struck us as very nice and undoubtedly a very keen man. At once he entered heart and soul into the Division and became in every way one of us, taking the greatest interest in our doings and welfare. His first action was to prepare a raid to be conducted by Steavenson and myself, which was to have come off on the night of the 21st May, but on the 20th the order came that it was not to take place. All arrangements, down to the most minute detail, had been made, and everybody was very keen about it, so the cancelling came as a great disappointment. It would have been a very difficult thing—particularly Steavenson's part of it; but I have no doubt that it would have been successful.

There had been a very considerable amount of air fighting here lately, and on the 20th two Boche aeroplanes were brought down in our lines. We had taken several German prisoners and they complained very much of the bad food that they were getting in the trenches. They also said that the morale was bad and that they were heartily sick of it, which led us to believe that the end was coming in sight. It is terrible to think of our optimism in those days.

I am very glad that Lieut. Garreau was given the *Croix de Guerre* by the French. He thoroughly deserved it and his work during the Frise time was really excellent.

On the 25th of May we moved back for our training for the Big Push, full of enthusiasm, which carries one a long way.

This training business was infinitely harder work than being in the line. There was no rest all day and far into the night for a good many of us. Our Headquarters were at Ailly-sur-Somme, a most charming place, and all the battalions were equally well situated round about. The 17th Battalion were in our old Headquarters at Vaux.

Our training ground for the push was a big open bit of country which, when we came to it, was covered with beautiful crops, but these we had absolutely to ignore, and in no time there was very little left. What compensation the farmers got I cannot imagine, but certainly it would not be less than £1,000 for our piece of ground alone. It seemed wicked, but there was nothing else to be done as all this country was very closely cultivated and it was absolutely necessary to carry out this training. On this ground we dug, I suppose, from six to seven thousand yards of trenches; of course not to full depth but enough to show what it looked like. Here we practised every day, getting every man to know exactly what was required of him and what the ground would look like on *the* day. They all tumbled to it very fairly well, and certainly our practice improved all of us very much indeed.

We practised all day and every day. First, battalions singly, and then two or more battalions together.

All this was a very happy life, and we felt that we were in for a good show and one which ought to have a great bearing on the length of the war.

On the 7th of June we had a sort of dress rehearsal which the Divisional Commander attended. As regards weather, it was a beast of a day, pouring with rain and everybody got soaked through. But things went off quite satisfactorily and he was very nice. He certainly did get a move on and his keenness permeated through to all ranks. By now we had all got to know him much better and very much liked his methods—but by Jove he did drive us! The men were in absolutely top-hole form and when the time came they were to render a very good account of themselves.

The final touch to our training was put on when the Army Commander, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, came to see us at work on the 9th June, and told General Shea that he was very pleased with us.

Everybody at this time was very much depressed by the awful news about poor Lord Kitchener. It really was too tragic. I personally felt that I had lost a very good and staunch friend. Ever since the time when I knew him in South Africa he had been nothing but kindness itself to me and always only too ready to help on every possible occasion.

On the 19th of June we were back again in the line, and found that great improvements had been made during our absence. It was all most interesting, and we were mad to get at the Boche.

Just before the time we went out for training the French had taken over all Steavenson's piece on our right and a certain amount of ours—in fact they had got as far as A.P.2, in other words, half of our Brigade

front. Altogether ours was a most proud position—the right of the whole British Army ; and we thoroughly appreciated the honour, which was still further increased by the knowledge that our French neighbours were the celebrated Corps de Fer. There had been considerable difficulties about our boundary, but these were successfully overcome, although it only left us a very narrow strip behind the lines, but as our forming up places were all forward of this, it did not very much matter. We also had to hand over to them a lot of things on which we had devoted a good deal of labour, but it was all in the good cause so we didn't mind that.

I have never seen a place so changed as ours. Our Headquarters for the battle—a pit just in the southwest of Maricourt—was very nearly completed. We had tunnelled into the side of the pit and made accommodation there for about 10 officers and 70 men, this being our Headquarters and those of our gunner group. The room was limited, but palatial to what I had expected. It was christened Stanley's hole, and many people have spent more or less uncomfortable times in it. It really was a foul place.

By the 23rd June, as the result of a very strenuous time for the last few days, we were able to say that everything that one can do had been done, and we were absolutely ready to go over the top at any moment they liked to tell us, which was very satisfactory and was just exactly what I wanted to do, *i.e.* do all our work and then have a few days rest before the day of attack came. We were so well prepared now that we were actually lending people to the 21st Brigade for work on their piece.

The French, on our right, had done an enormous amount of work—in fact they had changed the whole country. One of their tasks had been to dig three long communication trenches from Maricourt to Suzanne. These trenches were dug in the chalk and showed up terribly.

We did not know what had happened to the Boche. He was most extraordinarily quiet ; he hardly ever did any shelling to count, and all of our people were walking about with the greatest impunity. There were lots of places where you did not dare show yourselves a month before, and at this time we had working parties of a hundred or more working in broad daylight and in full view, but he did not pay the slightest attention to them. One might have thought that he had vacated his line, but that was not so because the patrols which we had out every night were always shot at, and reported that he held his trenches quite strongly. We were not going to be deceived and become over-confident, but I did think that we were in a very enviable position. Everybody was in tearing form and we were most optimistic. Even old Denham was satisfied.

The people we had on our right were the very celebrated French Corps de Fer. I must say I was very much impressed by their work and they were charming fellows to deal with. I was in close touch with Colonel de Coutard and our relations were of the most amiable description. All of our fellows, Battalion Commanders, Company Commanders and men, were on very good terms with them, so that we could congratulate ourselves that our liaison was very good.

What a change this all was to what it was about the Frise time, when at that time the Boches could bombard us as much as they liked and we could give them very little back. Now the whole place was stacked with guns and each gun had by its side hundreds of rounds.

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## CHAPTER. XV.

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**THE PRELIMINARY BOMBARDMENT. A SUCCESSFUL RAID. ORDER TO THE 89TH BRIGADE.**

I now quote from my diary :—

*25th June.* What is going on is absolutely glorious ! The dirty Boche has been pounded to hell. This afternoon we brought down three of their observation balloons and I had the luck to see one myself. One of our aeroplanes went up and did something—I don't know what it was—and the result was that there was a spurt of flame from a balloon and then the whole thing came down to the ground a mass of fire. Places which we have rather held in awe have been blown sky high. All through the day and night there is nothing but the roar of the guns and the enemy practically do not answer. To-night we are doing a raid on his trenches with the object of getting identifications. This is going to be done by the Bedfords, and I have no doubt it will be successful. They have practised it carefully and are full of keenness. We are asking the French to co-operate with their Artillery and they are only too delighted to let off their 75's. They require only the slightest excuse to carry out the most terrific bombardment, such as we have never seen before. When I asked the officer commanding their artillery for his help, his only answer was that it would be a pleasure to "arroser" their trenches for us.

*26th June.* Our raid was a great success and the Bedfords did grandly ; they always do. They killed five at least and brought back one prisoner, which was what they wanted very badly. All of our own fellows got back, although five were slightly wounded. General Shea and the Corps Commander have been round to-day and were most complimentary. This is all the more satisfactory because another Division tried to raid and did not get anybody. After their raid last night I went up to see them and congratulated them. It really was the weirdest scene imaginable. All of those men with blackened faces, very excited and very proud of themselves, having supper by the light of one candle and at the same time an incessant roar of guns (thank Heaven—ours !) going on.

The following correspondence took place between the French gunners and ourselves :—

89th Brigade d'Infanterie,  
26 Juin, 1916.

Mon cher Colonel,

Je tiens à vous exprimer toute ma gratitude pour l'aide si efficace prêtée par votre artillerie au cours de notre coup de main de cette nuit.

Vos canons ont grandement contribué à en faire un succès. J'espère que ce succès n'est que le prélude de beaucoup d'autres et que nous aurons l'occasion d'aller coté à coté pendant de nombreuses et glorieuses journées.

Veuillez agréer, mon cher Colonel, à mes sentiments de bien cordiale camaraderie et de sincère sympathie.

27 Juin, 1916.

153me Division,  
D'Infanterie.

Le Lt. Colonel Bossu,  
Commandant l'A D 153.  
à M. le General Stanley,  
Commandant la 89th Brigade  
d'Infanterie Anglaise.

Artillerie.

J'ai été profondément touché, mon Général, des sentiments que vous avez bien voulu exprimer dans votre lettre du 26 Juin.

Notre rôle ce jour là a été minime ; tout le succès de l'opération revient à ceux qui l'ont executé ou appuyé de plus près. C'est d'autant plus aimable à vous de nous en attribuer une part. Les batteries du groupe Beauville, à qui j'ai fait communiquer votre lettre et moi-même nous vous en sommes très reconnaissants.

We are now fairly launched on this very important move in the Great Adventure. Things have been stoking up for some time past and serious business was begun a few days ago. A more magnificent sight you could not possibly imagine than to see all of those guns firing on our side and showing the Boche at last that we mean to be supreme and are going to crush him. For a few days past we have been bombarding his trenches, his roads and his villages and back areas, day and night, with all sorts of guns, both heavy and light. Up till this afternoon he has been more than quiet with his artillery; although his favourite places were being pounded he made no reply whatever. This

evening he has been rather more active and has put back a certain number, but not a twentieth part of what was sent over him at the same time. The effect of our shells and trench mortars, etc., is appalling. Whole buildings going up in the air, trenches which we have looked at with a certain amount of awe have been levelled ; in fact, after having sat down patiently waiting for months—even years—we are now seeing the dirty dogs getting more than they have ever given us ; but there is still more in store for them. The day of vengeance has come and he has got to pay now for all the misery that he has caused. There is an incessant roar of guns day and night, and everywhere you see men going about with smiles on their faces, and we know that we are going to reap our harvest.

I am very sorry to say that poor Sergeant Rea, who was one of the original fellows who came from the Grenadiers to help us, was killed to-day by a shell in Maricourt. He was a most splendid fellow and everyone had the greatest affection and respect for him. His service to us has been invaluable. We shall miss him very much. It is sad that he should have been killed just at this moment when we are going to have our triumph over the enemy.

It is no pleasure walking about near our Headquarters ; the whole place is absolutely stiff with guns, both French and English, and they don't hesitate to loose them off, even if you are only a few yards in front of them.

*27th June.* The Boche has stoked up very considerably and we have been having quite a lively time. The result has been that we have had quite a considerable

number of casualties. However, one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs and we cannot expect to have everything our own way. Everyone is quite well and in first rate form, but the constant noise is having a very tiring effect. The Boches must be having a perfectly awful time, and I don't know how they can stand it. Yesterday we had quite a nasty time. General Shea has just been up and has been very nice and comforting. His visits and his cheeriness fill us all with confidence, and I very much appreciate it.

*28th June.* It is incredible, but two Boches ran across to our lines yesterday and said that up till a week ago they had no idea that we were preparing for an attack here. How on earth they did not know is beyond one's belief because the whole place is a mass of digging and crowds of men. They certainly have missed their opportunities.

*29th June.* Last night we sent out two patrols over to the German lines. They had a certain amount of fighting, and one party was detached to go round the enemy who were holding them up. Time went by and they did not turn up, and this morning we gave them up as lost. This evening, just after dark, they came strolling back to our lines, having been wandering about for twenty-four hours in the German lines. They saw a few Germans, but most of them had been withdrawn. An extraordinary performance! They said that our own shelling was damnable.

*30th June.* Had a final prowl round the trenches and had a talk with the men. They are in splendid form and very excited about the prospects of to-morrow—the day of the Great Push.

[Photo Elliott & Fry]  
Col. E. F. GOSETT.



[Photo Bacon]  
Lt.-Col. E. H. TROTTER.



[Photo Carbonara

17th Batt. K.L.R. MARCH THROUGH LIVERPOOL.



Copy of order sent to the Battalions of the 89th Infantry Brigade :—

TO ALL BATTALIONS OF THE  
89TH INFANTRY BRIGADE.

The day has at last come when we are to take the Offensive on a large scale, and the result of this will have a great effect on the course and duration of the war.

It is with the utmost confidence that we go forward, the Battalions of which the City of Liverpool is so justly proud, determined to make a name for themselves in their first attack, and the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment to add still more to their glorious record.

The 89th Brigade occupies the most honourable position in the whole of the British Army, because not only are we on the extreme right, but we are fighting side by side with the celebrated French Corps de Fer.

One and all will strive to prove ourselves worthy of this distinction, and to show our French neighbours what the British can do. That being so, success is assured.

With these words I wish you the best of luck and a glorious victory.

F. STANLEY, Brigadier-General,  
Commanding 89th Infantry Brigade.

28th June, 1916.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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ACCOUNT OF THE ATTACK ON JULY 1ST.  
CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES. A SHORT  
REST. COLONEL TROTTER'S DEATH.

*Extract from Diary, dated July 2nd, 1916 :—*

The attack was to have been on the morning of the 29th, but on the 26th and 27th it poured with rain, so, although it was a bold step to take, the time was cancelled and put forward 48 hours. At first we were awfully sick, because we were all getting absolutely stupified with the bombardment which was going on, and wanted to get and to be up and doing ; but it really was a most wise decision as the mud was awful.

It was a difficult matter to arrange, because if we had kept the battalions in the line it would have been too long for them, so the whole thing had to be altered. However, there were no hitches and the two assaulting battalions got a little rest from the incessant shelling and noise.

After all these days of bombardment the Boche trenches were simply like sand-dunes, enormous mounds and holes of earth, absolutely untenable, with all the wire cut to ribbons. The artillery work had been of the most brilliant description. Wire cutting is a great art, but there was none left, and as for the heavy stuff the result is positively awful and the trench mortars are just as bad.

Well, on *the* morning, at 6-25 a.m. we started an "intense" bombardment. You never heard such a row; it was quite impossible to hear oneself speak, and then, after sixty-five minutes, we popped over the parapet. Of course I had to be in my dug-out and wait for messages, so had to miss the most glorious sight imaginable. Those who saw it say that it was quite wonderful, and it might have been a sort of ceremonial performance. Those miles and miles of men just went steadily forward with our artillery pouring shells in front of them.

It was all done to the clock, and our piece was done to the tick, so was the 21st Brigade's next to ours on the left and the French on the right. Trench after trench was collared, and then the prisoners started to pour in. Everything went like clockwork. The 18th Division were hung up for a bit by a trench full of machine guns. This exposed the left flank of the 21st Brigade, with the result that they suffered pretty heavily, and that rather held up the 90th Brigade, who had to pass through the 21st, but eventually the 18th Division got in, and then the trick was done.

When the 90th Brigade had taken the village of Montauban, we were then told to go on and take the Briqueterie. It had been well pounded with all kinds of guns, and at the right time they lifted and in we went. Everyone who saw it said it was beautifully done. At first there was no opposition; then they came on a batch who had been hidden in a very deep dug-out, but after a bit of a scrap they surrendered. Of course it was a splendid haul. Roughly, what our little lot got was 1 Colonel (of the 6th Reserve Regiment), 1 Captain (commanding a composite battalion), an

Adjutant, a Major, 5 other officers, 175 men, 2 "minenwerfers," 6 machine guns, and all sorts of other things ; not bad, was it ?

Then we had to dig like the devil and consolidate the ground we had won. It was awful hot and by night the men were absolutely done. Then came the worst part of all—night. Everything went well till quite late, and at about 1-30 I turned in for an hour and a half ; turned out again at three o'clock and found that everything had been quite quiet. Soon after that our troubles began, and no sooner had I taken over than a S.O.S. signal was sent up at Montauban ; that meant getting all the guns on there at once. Five minutes later up it went from the Briqueterie. No sooner had that happened than my wires were cut and I could get no information. It was simply damnable, but the guns fired like hell and the attack was beaten off. I believe they killed an awful lot and took a few prisoners. On going over the ground this morning they found a tremendous lot of dead and in a large wood close by an enormous lot more. Yesterday afternoon two battalions were seen marching into this wood, so of course it was searched up and down with heavy and light stuff. These were the battalions which attacked this morning—some the Briqueterie, some Montauban, and some the French, where they got an awful dressing down, and in one place they left eight officers and 134 men prisoners, and in another they attacked with two companies and only half got away ; so I expect that, one way and another, there's very little left of those two battalions.

So ended a very trying night.

It was a glorious success and the men were one and all magnificent. The night was rather a trying time as we were heavily counter-attacked, but this we drove off. We were very much complimented by the Army, Corps, and Divisional Commanders, and the Commander-in-Chief wired to Lord Derby as follows:—

“ You will be glad to know that the 30th Division are successful both in attack and defence and are fighting like heroes.”

The following telegrams were received, also a letter from Colonel de Coutard, commanding the French Brigade on our left.

Message from Lieut.-General W. N. Congreve, V.C., C.B., M.V.O., Commanding XIII. Corps, dated 1st July, 1916:—

*To 30th Division.*

“ Please convey to all ranks my intense appreciation of their splendid fighting which has attained all asked of them and resulted in heavy losses to the enemy, nearly 1,000 prisoners having already been passed through the cage.—GENERAL CONGREVE.”

Message from the Rt. Hon. E. G. V. Earl of Derby, K.G., G.C., V.O., C.B., dated 2nd July, 1916:—

“ Convey to 30th Division my best congratulations on their splendid work. Lancashire will indeed be proud of them.—DERBY.”

Message from General Sir H. S. Rawlinson, Bart., K.C.B., C.V.O., Commanding Fourth Army, dated 2nd July, 1916:—

*To XIII. Corps.*

“ Please convey to all ranks 30th Division my congratulations on their capture and defence of Montauban. They have done excellent work and will be attacking again before long.—RAWLINSON.”

Message received by Fourth Army from General Headquarters :—

“7th July, 1916.

*“To Fourth Army.*

“The Commander-in-Chief wishes the following wire from His Majesty the King circulated to all ranks :—‘ Please convey to the Army under your command my sincere congratulations on the results achieved in the recent fighting. I am proud of my troops; none could have fought more bravely.—GEORGE R.I.’”

Le 11 Juillet, 1916.

20th Corps, D'ARMEE.	Le Colonel de Coutard, Commandant la 77e Brigade.
39th Division Infanterie, 77e Brigade.	à M. le General Stanley, Commandant la 89th Brigade.
Mon General,	

Je vous prie de bien vouloir m'excuser si je n'ai pas repondu plus tot à votre lettre du 7 Juillet; je l'ai reçu en plein combat, pendant que nous attaquions le village d'Hardecourt et le plateau de Maltz Horn.

J'ai été très honore de votre appreciation élogieuse au sujet de ma brigade; elle est d'un grand prix pour mes troupes and pour moi; mais je tiens à vous dire que nous avons également admiré la superbe attitude au feu, le courage et le sang-froid de nos voisins, officiers et hommes du 17 bataillon de King's Liverpool. En particulier, les relations si cordiales entretenues avec leur chef le Colonel Fairfax ont permis de remarquer ses hautes qualités militaires et ont fait regretter l'éloignement de ce chef brillant et de son magnifique Bataillon. Je me propose d'attirer l'attention des autorités militaires

françaises sur cet officier superieur qui à si bien collabore avec la gauche de ma Brigade.

Permettez moi de vous remercier d'avoir bien voulu transmettre aux autorites superieures le rapport eloj' eux concernant le Commandant Lepetit, le Capitaine Nirascou et l'interprete Rodenback. Je suis tres heureux de voir leurs merites si hautement reconnus.

Je souhaite, mon General, que les circonstances de guerre nous place a nouveau cote à cote pour l'attaque ; je ne doute pas que devant nos efforts reunis les Boches ne soient obliges de ceder le terrain comme le ir Juillet.

Veuillez agreer mon General, l'expression de mes sentiments respectueux et devoues. H. COUTARD.

It was a great pity that the troops on our flank should have been held up, because if they had been as successful as we had been we should have been able to get on much further.

On the 5th we were taken out for a rest, but it was only a short one, and we were itching to be at them once more.

I am sorry to say that the 18th Battalion with the 21st Brigade came in for a very bad time. Out of 20 officers they had 17 hit, and came out with a total strength of about 250. The people on the left of them did not get on, and the result was that the left of the 18th was in the air, added to which they came under very heavy shrapnel fire. The fighting and gallantry of the 18th Battalion was beyond description, and had certainly rendered the work of the people on their left possible. They carried on in spite of very heavy machine gun fire from a small bit of trench which had not been touched by the artillery, and by pushing on and bombing

down at them, managed to clear this out and so allowed the 18th Division to come along. It was a magnificent piece of work and Colonel Trotter might well be proud of his fellows.

Our losses for the Brigade amounted to three hundred for the actual show. That was without counting any losses for the few days beforehand. Altogether, the figures worked out at about 500 casualties, which, considering the success we gained, could not be looked upon as unduly high.

The Boche trenches were completely blotted out, and nearly all their dug-outs had been blown in. We shall never know what their losses were owing to the numbers buried, but they must have been very high indeed. We found three guns smashed in Bernafay Wood, but of course did not get far enough to get any more, though I feel certain our artillery smashed a lot more.

We were very pleased and proud of the following which arrived :—

“ The Army Commander directs me to forward to you the following extract from a report received from our liaison officer with the French. It will, he feels sure, be valued by you and the 30th Division :—

‘ General Nourrisson, G.O.C. 39 Division, 20th Corps, who took Hardecourt, expressed to General Fayelle his admiration of the British troops, his neighbours, whose bravery and discipline under heavy and continual firing was beyond praise. Leur attitude au feu était remarquable.’

“ (*Signed*) A. A. MONTGOMERY,

“ Major-General,

6.” “ General Staff, Fourth Army.

The shooting throughout of our artillery was magnificent and was the talk and admiration of everybody. The way in which the eighteen pounders cut the wire was absolutely marvellous. There was none left, and the Infantry could not say enough in their praise. And as for the South Lancs. Pioneers, well, they simply worked until they dropped.

We went back for a few days into camps a little bit behind the line, and re-organised, ready for our next effort. On the 6th Colonel Trotter came in and told me all about his business on the 1st. He was very low about his losses, but awfully proud of the way in which his Battalion fought ; pushing on and pushing on, as they did, until they got past the nest of machine guns. We had a nice long talk together. Alas ! It was the last one that we were to have, as on the 8th July he was killed just outside the Headquarters of the 21st Brigade. The Boche suddenly put a few shells over them, and he and poor Smith, commanding the Manchesters, were both killed at the same time.

Poor old Trotter. Little did I think when he came to us in the autumn of 1914 that before two years had passed he would be no more. He left a blank that could never be filled, and somehow one would never like it to be filled. His was a unique personality. His discipline was one which sprang from affection which all his men had for him. They all, from their love of him, simply could not do anything but try to please him. His ideals were of the highest. He expected the best out of everyone and by his setting the example himself, he always got it. His love for his Battalion was heart-whole ; it always had been so throughout his soldiering —and he made a point of not only knowing all his men,

but of knowing their lives and their belongings. Whenever he went on leave, he spent it in the interests of his men, going to their homes, relating to their friends and relations stories of what they were doing, and a hundred other kind actions.

He was more like a father to each individual in his Battalion than anything else, and his love for them was unbounded.

And so died one of the noblest soldiers that ever stepped. His name will never be forgotten in Liverpool and his memory will always be held in deepest respect and affection.

On the 7th our men had well rested, and they had got bathed and all had clean clothes, the result being that, as usual, they were in first rate form.

We started at this time little cards of appreciation that could be given by Commanding Officers and counter-signed by the Brigadier. We found this was rather necessary because so many of the fellows behaved in a most gallant way, and the number of rewards was so small, so this was the means of conveying to them and to their relations at home, the appreciation of those under whom they were serving.

It was very interesting about this time to hear the stories of various people as to what had happened to them during the fight. One of our fellows had actually spoken to the Colonel we took prisoner at the Briqueterie, who said to him : " It is horrible. You are absolutely murdering my men over there. It is not fair; it is not war." One of our fellows said : " Well, what about Verdun and what about earlier in the war ? " " Oh, that was different. We have always fought fairly." Then, again, two Boche officers who

were taken said : " Well, at all events, we have beaten your fleet and gained a glorious victory." But the other one chipped in saying : " No, you must not say that. It was no victory for us." The majority of the men who were taken prisoners were quite pleased and did not hesitate to say it. We were all very hopeful at this time that the cavalry would soon be able to push through and do great execution behind the German lines.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE FIGHT FOR TRONES WOOD.

The 8th July, which was a Saturday, we turned into a Sunday and had a Brigade Church service for all except the Roman Catholics, who had their service apart. It really was very nice, and everybody appreciated it. We had intended to spend the rest of the day nicely and quietly, but immediately after our church parade we got orders to move up at once in view of further operations. I think, without exception, the night of the 8th was the most uncomfortable night I have spent out in France. It was pitch dark before we got to our destination, and bitterly cold, added to which the guns were firing within a few yards of where our Headquarters were.

On the 10th we were told to take over the Bricquererie and the line in front of it. It was a nasty piece and the situation was decidedly obscure.

*Extract from diary dated July 14th:—*

Well, here we are back again, resting. We have had an awful time and I have never been so anxious, but it all went off splendidly and we are in high favour, so that is all right.

Now let me start a somewhat coherent account of what has happened, if possible. Dates I have almost forgotten, but the 11th was the big day.

It was on the 8th, in the afternoon, that we were told to be ready to move, and soon afterwards we marched off to Montauban, which was full of troops. I don't think I have ever spent so uncomfortable a night. It was bitterly cold; our transport had gone wrong; we had

to flounder through the mud in pitch darkness, and got filthy and wet, added to which the guns were going off just over our heads and making a deafening noise.

My last entry was that we were going off on a somewhat important business. Of course I could not then put in what it was, but it was what seems now to have become quite celebrated, viz., Trones Wood.

On Monday, the 10th, Shea came to me and said : " You've got to take the wood at dawn." So off we went that night and established our H.Q. in the dug-out in the Brickworks. When we arrived we found that Steavenson's lot had had an awful time and had been driven out. He had just before sent forward a company of the 17th which we had sent to help him, with the result that they had come in for the bad time and poor old Higgins was killed, which I was most awfully sorry about.

The Boches were shelling pretty hard at the time and the dug-outs were packed. Eventually we did the reliefs and got Steavenson's lot away and then set to work.

Our plans were all cut and dried for the attack, and at 3-27 a.m. (my old school number for luck) I slipped the 2nd Bedfords at it. At first they got on quite all right ; then there was a little machine gun fire, but that stopped soon, and then we had to wait patiently till they had got through the wood. Soon prisoners began to come in, and reports also, some of our wounded, and at last, by degrees, we heard that they had got all the wood and were digging in. The wood was frightfully thick and they could only see two or three yards in front of them. As they advanced, so the Boches emerged from admirably screened dug-outs behind them and sniped them. It was perfectly damnable, so they

said. We had a lot of "nettoyeurs," in fact, an extra large number, but even this was not enough.

Well, the whole day went on like this ; our men being shelled, but digging in and altogether having an awful time.

Eventually in the afternoon we got in reports that the Boches were very strong and that we had been driven back on the north of the wood and had had to give part of the ground we had won. At the same time a strong Boche post on the right of the wood had been giving a lot of trouble, so that I sent back word for a company of the 19th to come up and take it. There was rather a delay in getting them up, and all this time things were becoming serious. However, I pushed on this company when it did arrive, only with the result that there were a good many casualties and they were driven back. Smith, the Company Commander, was wounded. Night was now coming on, and we had been warned that a counter-attack was imminent. Sure enough it came and, alas ! they succeeded in getting a bit more of the wood back. A prisoner had been taken that day with the orders on him, saying that the attack was to be delivered when a green light went up, and when the objective was reached a white would be sent up. You can imagine my horror when, after seeing the green light go up, I soon after saw the white one. It was awful !

The only thing to do was to counter-attack, and I whipped up two companies of the 17th Battalion at them. Things did not go quite so well as I should have liked at first, but by splendid leading Brinson and Thompson got the men into the wood and, beating back the Boches, dug in in the corner. At the same time some of the Bedfords had held on splendidly and had

been backed up by some of the others, and were established in the south-west corner of the wood.

All this time never a word had come back as to what was going on, and at one time it looked as if the Bedfords, two companies out of the 17th, and one company of the 19th Battalion had all been done in. But about 2-30 in the morning we got a message to say that the Bedfords were holding on to their bit, but nothing at all about the 17th. I had sent forward runners to try and find out what was going on, when to my surprise who should walk in but Brinson. He told me all that had happened and said that Fairfax was in the wood. They had had an awful time, but had not lost many men, were all dug down, and could hold on; so we had a confab and decided that they should do so and get up some wire.

We had a beastly day next day with shelling and lost quite a lot of runners. It was curious they didn't seem able to shell the trench, but were putting them all round the wood. They also "strafed" the Brickworks for all they were worth; in fact things were very unpleasant, culminating in an attack on the new trench just after dark. That was easily dealt with, and it came as a great surprise to the Boche to find wire up. Of course during all this time we were having a good few casualties, but were killing a lot of Germans.

I have only just sketched lightly over the outlines of a terrible period of anxiety, and it is impossible to go into details—it would take ages.

Well, after that attack we were due to be relieved, and thank the Lord it went through all right, although I was rather uneasy until it was safely accomplished. However, at about 4 o'clock yesterday morning we

wended our way back to M. very proud of my lads and intensely pleased to think that we had handed over to another Brigade something which no other Brigade had done, *i.e.*, a piece of the wood firmly held.

We are supposed to have done very well and to have achieved something which, if it had not been partially successful, would have held up operations. Two other Brigades had tried it and failed, so we've every reason to be proud of our Brigade.

I saw Sir Henry Rawlinson (Commanding Fourth Army) yesterday morning and he was most congratulatory and thanked me for what we had done. Shea also was very pleased and told me so this morning. He stood and watched all the lads go by this morning, and said how proud he was of the Division and how magnificently our lot had done. So you can imagine we are very proud people and have our tails tightly curled.

#### REPORT ON OPERATIONS AT TRONES WOOD BETWEEN THE 11TH AND 13TH JULY, 1916.

The attack was delivered by the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, at 3-27 a.m. on the 11th instant, after a heavy bombardment.

It was just before light, and as soon as the attackers were seen machine guns opened on them from Trones Alley and also where this trench enters Trones Wood.

This had rather the effect of driving the attack off to the right.

On entering the wood it was found to be extremely thick undergrowth, and this rendered it very difficult to keep direction and also screened all the defenders.

The attackers carried right on through the dense scrub and gained the eastern edge of the wood, while the

20th Battalion K.L.R. bombed up the Maltz Horn trench to the road which leads into Trones Wood from Guillemont.

The leader of this bombing attack was confused by several small trenches and thought he had reached his objective. This unfortunately was not the case. He started consolidation of his own point, but only discovered later his mistake and then there was no question of rushing it, because it would appear to have been considerably reinforced.

O.C. 20th Battalion K.L.R. informed me at least twice that he was in touch with the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, yet on the other hand, the officer commanding that company of the Bedfords, in writing, said that he was in touch with the 20th Battalion K.L.R., so it was taken that communication had been established. The matter has been cleared up by the knowledge now gained that, owing to the extraordinary density of the scrub, the O.C. of this Company lost direction, and instead of finding himself in the right place, A-B, he got into the position C-D.

He subsequently found out his mistake and proceeded to move northwards into his right position. He then tumbled on the strong point X, and was driven somewhat back into the south-east edge of the wood again. There were so many Germans lurking about in the bushes that they decided to dig in as quickly as possible, although they knew they were in the wrong place, with the result that they and the southern company got a trench of about 180 yards long dug. It is hoped that this will be of use in the future—it was last night when attacked, and very many Germans were accounted for here.

The other Companies, although they had a considerable number of casualties, reached their proper places and dug in at once—a most satisfactory performance.

It was not till then, however, that the troubles began. Although Colonel Poyntz had arranged for a very large proportion of nettoyeurs, these did not prove to be sufficient, as from all accounts the wood was not only full of Germans, but also dug-outs and narrow trenches. With the thick scrub these could not be located, with the result that when the attack had passed on sniping from behind began at once.

The men, knowing that shelling would soon start, were digging in hard, and at the same time were being badly sniped, causing many casualties.

It had been understood that a strong point had been established by the Brigade at the apex of the wood, but this was not so, and at the time of the attack the whole wood was in the hands of the enemy.

Immediately he reached this point the O.C. Northern Company met with increasing opposition from the north. He withstood this for some time, but it became worse, and at last he most reluctantly withdrew, having suffered about 50 per cent. casualties. Captain Beale, who commanded this company, got forced out of the wood on the western side with a portion of his men, and held on to Longueval Alley. He subsequently attempted to re-enter the wood across the open, but owing to the opposition he could not do so. Therefore, as there was a post of the South African Brigade in Longueval Alley, he withdrew his men *via* Bernafay Wood and re-entered Trones Wood from the south, joining up with the supporting company.

In the meantime the strong point on the Guillemont Road was causing so much trouble that a company of the 19th Battalion K.L.R. was sent forward to deal with it. They entered the wood on the south-western side and immediately met with opposition from snipers. They pushed on, however, to the strong point and attacked it, but unfortunately failed to capture it, and had to fall back to the south-west corner of the wood, where they dug in.

We had been warned to expect an attack that night by two companies with grenadiers. The signal for the attack was to be one green light, and one white light was to be sent up if the objective was reached.

The green one was sent up and, after some little time, the white one went up also.

As soon as the green one went up a barrage was put up, but it appears that the Germans entered by the strong point on the Guillemont Road and north of it.

This was rendered practicable by reason of the space left vacant by the company which lost direction.

After a desperate resistance, in which the Germans lost very heavily, the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment were driven back, but the remains of two companies under Captain Wynne held on to the south-west corner in the most determined way.

Immediately the white rocket went up I gave Lieut.-Colonel Fairfax orders to counter-attack at once with two companies of the 17th Battalion.

These companies were moved up very quickly and succeeded in getting a footing in the south-eastern corner of the wood.

Owing to the darkness and the thickness of the wood it was impossible for them to penetrate far into

the wood, but they drove the enemy to about the line east and west running through Guillemont Strong Point, and there they dug themselves in.

Captain Brinson, 17th Battalion K.L.R., did most excellent work in leading and keeping his men together in a position rendered most difficult by darkness and the density of the wood. Through his action we regained a considerable amount of the lost ground at the southern end of the wood.

At a later period Lieut.-Colonel Fairfax, 17th Battalion K.L.R., joined him in the wood.

Communication was established between the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment in the south-western corner and the 17th Battalion K.L.R. in the south-eastern corner of the wood.

The positions of each were as shown in the sketch.

Captain Brinson, acting under orders from Lieut.-Colonel Fairfax, reported on the situation at Brigade Headquarters, and received orders to hold on to what they had got and at the same time join up between the trenches (shown by dotted line), and wire the whole front.

This was successfully done during the day, and enabled us to easily dispose of the counter-attack that night, inflicting considerable loss on the enemy—the wire taking them completely by surprise, as shewn by the numerous shouts of "Kamerad" when they got hung on to it. They were suitably dealt with.

I cannot speak too highly of the dogged determination of both the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, and the 17th Battalion K.L.R., to hold on to, at all events, a portion of what we had gained, and it was with pride that one was able to hand over to the 55th Brigade at least a good and firmly established foot-hold in the wood, from which they were able to carry on their operations.

The relief on the night of July the 13th (the West Kent's taking over) was carried out most satisfactorily, no casualties occurring.

I regret that these operations should have cost us casualties to the extent of—

Officers .. .. .. .. ..	<b>17</b>
Other ranks .. .. .. .. ..	<b>498</b>

but this is attributable to the horrible conditions of fighting a screened enemy at short range and bombing distance. Casualties from shell fire were not numerous, curiously enough, considering the bombardment which the enemy gave to the wood.

I would specially call attention to the good leadership and enterprise of :—

Captain Wynne .. ..	2nd Bn. Bedford Regt.
Captain Beale .. ..	2nd Bn. Bedford Regt.
Captain Brinson .. ..	17th Bn. K.L.R.
Lieut. B. S. Thompson ..	17th Bn. K.L.R.

I would also call attention to the good work done by the carrying parties in the wood, the runners and stretcher bearers, who, regardless of heavy shell fire, carried out their duties admirably and undaunted by the heavy casualties they suffered.

F. C. STANLEY,

Brigadier-General,  
Commanding 89th Infantry Brigade.

15th July, 1916.

We were then taken out so as to get a bit of a rest, but it was only to be a short one.

I received the following letter, dated the 14th July, from our Corps Commander under whom we had been for all this fighting :—

Extract from report by Fourth Army Liaison Officer with the French :—

" General Nourisson, G.O.C. 39th Division, 20th Corps, who took Hardecourt, expressed to General Fayolle his admiration of the British troops, his neighbours, whose bravery and discipline under heavy and continuous fire was beyond praise: ' Leur attitude au feu etait remarquable.' "

Advanced G.H.Q. wire to XIII. Corps, dated 13th July, 1916 :—

" General Balfourier, Commanding 20th French Corps, has expressed, through a British Liaison Officer,

his admiration for the magnificent fighting qualities displayed during recent operations by our XIII. Corps on his left, and his desire to find himself fighting alongside this Corps during subsequent operations. Will you please convey this information to the XIII. Corps." Message ends.

" My dear Ferdy,

" I am so sorry I have not seen you. I sent for you this a.m., and a motor to fetch you, but it returned saying you had left for \_\_\_\_\_. Owing to this battle I have been unable to come, and it looks as if I shall not be able to get away for a moment for several days, by which time I am afraid you will be out of reach. Therefore I write to tell you how grateful I am to you and your men for all the excellent work they have done—all that was asked of them. The Commander-in-Chief twice came to bid me tell the 30th Division how pleased he is with them. Will you tell the battalions and your staff all this. They have every right to be proud of themselves—I should say, of yourselves.

" Don't let them think, though, that they are finished soldiers ; we none of us can ever be that. They must go on working and have, too, to teach the drafts all they know themselves. Tell them this, and that I expect to see them back even better than before. Please the Blessed Goodness the Division will soon return to me.

" Adieu, and my thanks and congratulations to you.

" Yours ever,

" (Signed) W. CONGREVE."

Message from the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the British Armies in France. Dated 11th July, 1916 :—

*To the Fourth Army.*

" Commander-in-Chief desires his warm congratulations conveyed to XIII. Corps for their good work, and especially to 30th Division for gallant defence of Trones Wood yesterday and last night by 90th Brigade against such heavy counter-attacks. XIII. Corps have not only captured all its objectives, but has held all points gained firmly against all hostile efforts to re-take them. This is a record to be proud of. Such performances lead to certain and complete victory."

On the 15th, the whole Brigade was paraded and General Shea came and spoke to them. It really was rather fine and what he said was of the most complimentary description. He could not have given them higher praise or greater pleasure. It was most gratifying to know that the French Corps Commander had sent in to G.H.Q. through General Foch this request that when they went into action again our Corps might fight side by side with them. It would be impossible to imagine a greater compliment than this, coming as it did from the French Corps de Fer.

On the 15th Lord Derby paid us a fleeting visit and we were all delighted to see him. We were out of the line and in very good billets at this time, thoroughly enjoying ourselves, and very pleased with our recent performance.

I was very sorry that at this time we had to say good-bye to Colonel Denham. He was a great friend of us all and we all hated parting with him. He carried

with him the best wishes of us all. When Colonel Denham left, Colonel Rollo, who had up till now been second in command of the 17th Battalion, took over command of the 19th Battalion.

On the 16th General Shea went round the battalions and talked to all of the men informally, getting them to tell what their experiences had been. At first they were somewhat reticent and did not care much about talking, but they soon got over that, and the result was that we heard some very interesting experiences, and what is more learned quite a considerable amount from the way in which they talked. He was a wonderful man in this way, showing as he did such extraordinary personal interest in everyone.

We had been going forward on the 20th, but this was accelerated, and we got sudden orders to move on the 19th. This was to make room for troops coming up and we were only moved quite a short distance.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

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**ATTACK ON GUILLEMONT AND FALFREMONT  
FARM. SEYMOUR AND FAIRFAX LOST TO US.  
MOVED OUT OF XIII. CORPS.**

Now followed a period of nothing but orders and counter-orders. No doubt they could not be avoided, but at the same time they were very worrying ; we never knew what to be at. We had moved forward on the 19th and 20th, as already mentioned. On the 22nd and 23rd we had been actually ready to go forward to the attack and had everything packed up, but just at that moment we got orders to countermand any move. Well, so things went on until the 29th when we got definite orders as to what we were to do. In the meantime we had suffered a most dreadful blow by having received an order that Seymour, our Brigade-Major, was to go as G.S.O. 2 to the Guard's Division. They wanted to take him away at once, but I absolutely refused to let him go until after this fight which I knew we were in for. He was a most dreadful loss to us, but it was promotion for him and therefore one could not think of standing in his way, and even if one had attempted to keep him, it would have been no use.

About our new venture, which was to take place on the 30th, I must confess that we were not happy, and we had expressed ourselves on these lines to the Division, and I believe they, in their turn, had expressed the same views to the Corps. It was not for us to criticise the plans of those above us, but we one and

all recognised the enormous difficulty of the task which had been allotted to us. During these periods of changes, one of the changes had been on the lines that we wished, but within a few minutes our hopes were dashed to the ground, and this was cancelled. Our own particular job depended too much upon what happened to our flanks. If one or both of them did not succeed—and they each of them had an extremely difficult task to perform—then the success of our operation was out of the question. I wrote in my journal before the event: “We have got a very tough proposition in front of us, and if we are successful—as we mean to be—it will be a magnificent thing, far eclipsing everything that has been done before by our lads.” We foresaw that our losses would be heavy, because I warned Mrs. Stanley that Liverpool would be very sad about this time.

General Congreve, our Corps Commander, paid us a visit on the 28th. He was very nice over the whole thing. We discussed it and I told him that we would do our best, and he said: “I know you will, and if you cannot manage it, no other troops can,” which I took to be a great compliment.

*Extract from diary dated July 31st, 1916:—*

Now I can write a good deal which will be of the greatest interest, but which makes one very, very sad. Our poor Brigade has suffered terribly, and it will take many a long day before we recover, if ever we are quite the same.

We knew that we were in for a bad time and that very many people in Liverpool would be sad; that, unfortunately, has come only too true, and it makes one very miserable.

As usual, they did magnificently, but the task was too big.

A few days ago Sackville West's Brigade attacked Guillemont, and although they got in, they were turned out again, the result being that they suffered pretty heavily and were taken out of the line.

Yesterday the much bigger operation took place, when Steavenson's lot took on that place again. We were next to him, and on our right were the French, who were going for Maurepas, and they were also supposed to be attacking further south down to the river and beyond that again.

Well, the night before last, the 29th, just as it was getting a little dark, we moved out of our camp and the battalions got into their forming-up places, which means all sorts of trenches, some of which were deep, and some shallow. They had a rotten time getting there. The Boche started with a new kind of gas shell, which has a nasty effect first of all, but nothing bad until about eight hours after, when it makes men feel very sick with bad headache and pains in the stomach. Of course all had on their helmets, but a lot of them were very seedy, including Poyntz and Fairfax. They, however, arrived all right, but got pretty well shelled in their trenches with ordinary shells, mostly 5·9 and 4·2—nasty things.

Well, the hour to advance came, and of all bad luck in the world it was a thick fog ; so thick that you couldn't see more than about ten yards. It was next to impossible to delay the attack—it was much too big an operation—so forward they had to go. It will give some idea when I say that on one flank we had to go 1,750 yards over big rolling country. Everyone knows

what it is like to cross enclosed country which you know really well in a fog and how easy it is to lose your way. Therefore imagine these rolling hills, with no landmarks and absolutely unknown to anyone. Is it surprising that people lost their way and lost touch with those next to them? As a matter of fact, it was wonderful the way in which many men found their way right on to the place we wanted to get to. But as a connected attack—it was absolutely impossible.

We started off well. There was a trench just in front of us, with the remains of a farm there, and we had a little plan by which the French made a dash from the south and we from the west, and nipped it off, allowing the line to go forward. It was most successful and we scuppered all the Boches there, and there were a lot. It took them completely by surprise and they were all lying down in the bottom of the trench. Of course there was a lot of "Kamerad" business, but that is not thought much of now and one only was taken prisoner.

Then the difficulties began. The fog was intense; it was practically impossible to keep direction and parties got split up, but throughout we kept touch with the French. Owing to the heavy shelling all the Boches had left their main trenches and were lying out in the open with snipers and machine guns in shell holes, so of course our fellows were the most easy prey. By about 10 a.m. the fog cleared, and then it came to it that we had to do our best to collect up our people and make the best arrangements we could.

The people on our left had got right in to, and in some cases through, the village of Guillemont, but they were simply overwhelmed by the Boches and were

driven out—not without heavy losses. Also the French did not take Maurepas. We had some fellows right on a long way forward—a most gallant and creditable performance—but it was useless to think of trying to move until it was dark. After that they worked their way back, altogether about 250 of them.

When it was seen that we could not get our final objective, we set to work to strengthen and consolidate what we had taken, which was most important, seeing that it gave us a hill from which we could get artillery observation and which they had had three tries for before, but without success. This, although it was constantly under shell and machine gun fire, was successfully done, with the result that, thank Heaven! we at all events could say that, although the cost was very severe, something had been gained. They sent up that night and relieved us, and not before it was wanted, as everyone was dead tired. We ourselves did not get back until about 8-30 a.m., having been two nights without a wink of sleep.

Nothing would have mattered if it had been a complete success. It is so awfully sad now going about and finding so many splendid fellows gone. Sackville-West was not taking part in the operations, but as bad luck would have it a Boche aeroplane came over and dropped a bomb and he was wounded. Still he was lucky to get off with that, as I believe it killed seven and wounded several more.

There were any amount of gallant things done that day and all did splendidly. Cobham was excellent, and I hope they will give him something for it; he was of the greatest assistance to me. I am very sorry to say that poor Fraser, Adjutant 19th Battalion, was

killed. He is a very great loss; also Whiting, Orford, Lamb, Porritt and several more. It is dreadful to think of; I shall never forget it. I can't say enough for the splendid way in which everyone fought; they were absolutely grand, as they always are, and I don't mind saying that we, our Brigade, have come out of it with a lot of credit.

We are now going back to rest and re-organise, and it must take a long time. We are going clean out of this region and out of this Army, but we do not know exactly where yet.

Our losses were very severe in this attack. I estimated them at 1,450, leaving a very sad little party as the remains of the Brigade. After this we were taken out to rest, and were moved back, on August 2nd, to Huppy, in the neighbourhood and close to Abbeville. The billets were so good that, needless to say, we moved out of them the next night, and were pushed off to Merville and that district with a view to going in the line about Festubert and Givenchy—not much of a rest for a Division in the state in which we were. We thought that we should have to go into the line in about ten days time. Our condition was really rather a difficult matter, and the re-organisation took a tremendous lot of doing. The 17th Battalion K.L.R. was commanded by Peck, and there were practically no other officers besides Draper of any standing. They only had ten sergeants and 21 corporals left. The 19th had lost Colonel Rollo wounded, poor Wallace Fraser, the Adjutant, killed, and many other officers, and had only eight sergeants and seven corporals left. The 20th had got Cobham and Greenshields and a few other officers, but only eight sergeants and 12

corporals. The Bedfords, I was glad to say, did not suffer quite so severely.

I am sorry to say that at this time we lost the services of Colonel Fairfax. On the way up to the assembly position for the attack on Guillemont he got a dose of gas, and although he stuck it out most gallantly at the time of the attack, it was too much for him afterwards and he suffered very much. He went to an absolute shadow of himself, and although he wanted to stop on with the Battalion, I had to be quite firm and told him that it was out of the question. If he had not gone then I don't think that his life would be worth anything at all. He had been splendid all through this July fighting and had worthily gained the admiration of his Battalion.

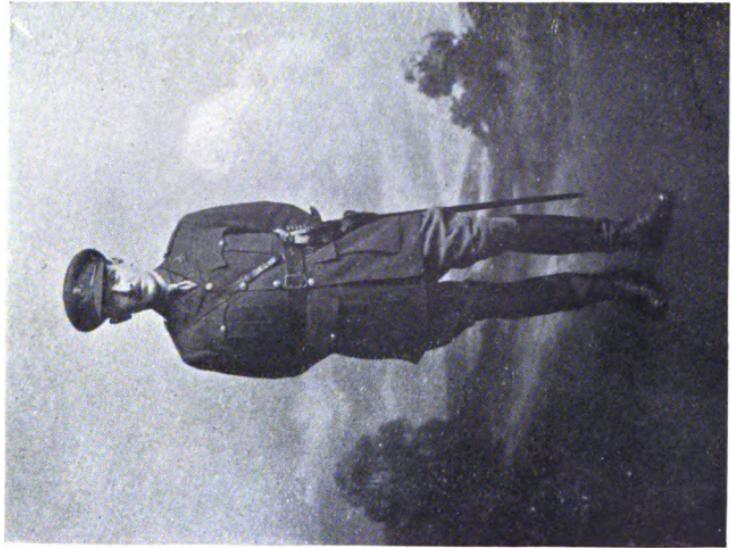
When we left for Huppy, Seymour was left behind, and we were all very much upset at losing him. His services to the Brigade for the whole time that he had been with it had been absolutely invaluable, and he had endeared himself to all. He had been so closely identified with the Brigade during this long time that he was a very hard man to re-place.

On the 10th our new Brigade-Major, Lascelles, was appointed. He had been G.S.O. 3 of the 55th Division. Before that he had been for some years in the Rifle Brigade, so that he could not have had a better training. He did not arrive till the 15th, so that we were left during all this rather critical time with no Brigade-Major, and then, after that, he had to pick up the hang of things. Rather rough on us, but we got accustomed to this sort of thing later on.

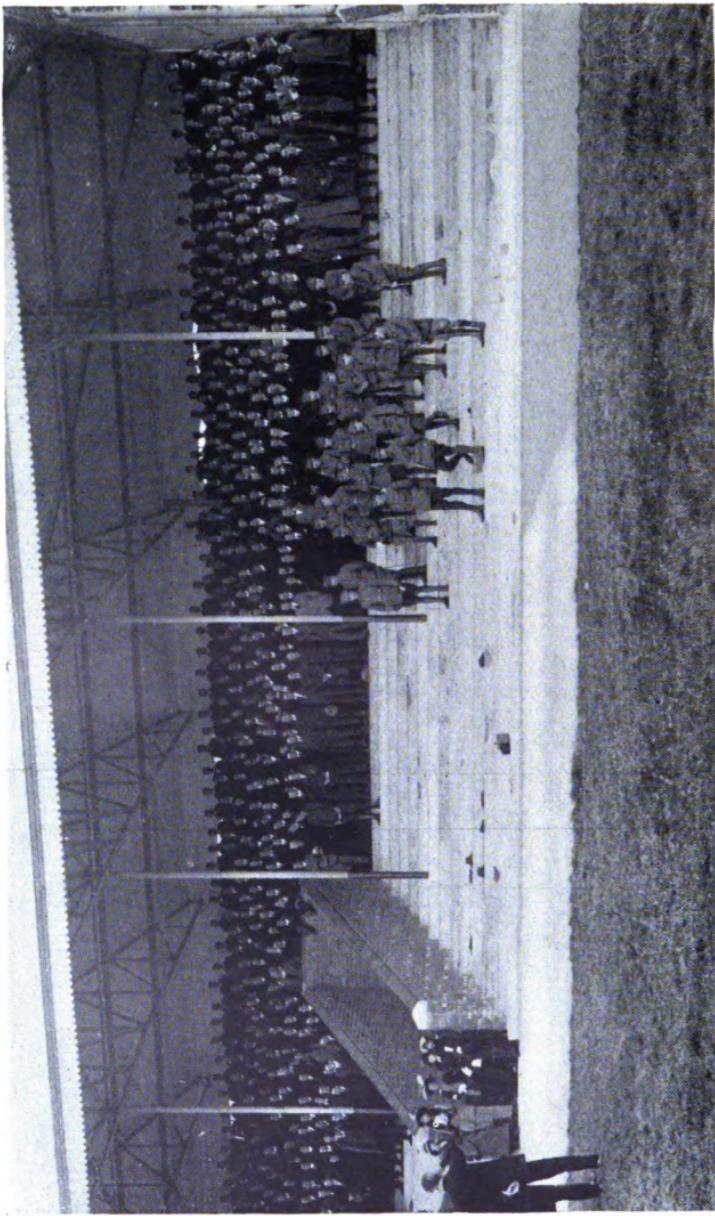
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Lt.-Col. H. COBHAM.



Lt.-Col. B. FAIRFAX.



CHURCH PARADE, HOOTON PARK, October 4th, 1914.

## CHAPTER XIX.

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**RE-ORGANISATION. TAKING OVER GIVENCHY SECTOR, AND OUR STAY IN THE NORTH.**

Although the billets in our new place were very good, and we were very well received by the inhabitants, we none of us very much cared for this kind of country. It was absolutely dead flat and one could only get about on the roads, instead of the country which we had been accustomed to at Maricourt, which was rolling ground and where we were able to ride everywhere.

I might mention that our canteens had been doing very good work, and had kept going all through the fighting when we were able to stop to supply the wants of our fellows, even through the battles, or rather, just before them. We also made quite a decent profit, and as a result were able to distribute free of charge cigarettes, tobacco and matches just before the fights. These were very much appreciated by the men. We were also able to put by a little bit of money, and this came in very useful now when one could buy vegetables, so we made very good cash distributions to the battalions for that purpose.

Amongst our losses during the fight I am sorry to say that Garreau, our interpreter, was wounded. He was a great loss to us as we had all got to like him very much indeed and looked upon him quite as one of us. But he was not badly hit and we soon got him back again.

During this time drafts were coming in and we were gradually re-organising. It was a difficult matter,

but everybody was in very good spirits and we knew that in our July fighting we had gained quite a reputation, and made up our minds to build up again and be ready for the next time we were required. We had, I am proud to say, a tremendous *esprit de corps*, and that carried us a very long way indeed. Of course many of the drafts had no old associations with us at all, but one was pleased to see that, after a few days, they settled down and seemed quite happy and contented with their lot. This is rather a big thing to say because many of them had ideas that they were going to be sent to battalions for which they had enlisted, but as there were enormous numbers required, this, I take it, was an impossibility, and they had to be drafted to where they were most required.

Many of these drafts were magnificent; more or less Territorials who had, some of them, been training in England for twenty-one months—particularly some of the Liverpool Scottish, who were quite first-rate.

During our July fighting I did a very foolish thing, and that was I put the band into the fighting, and unfortunately they suffered very heavily, having about 15 or 16 casualties. The loss of them was very much felt, as music has a wonderful effect when we are out of the line and it cheers everybody up in a most extraordinary way. We re-formed another band, and that stupid mistake did not occur again.

During this time we had some very good sports in which Olley showed up magnificently. He was a wonderful little man. He not only won the long distance race, but the mile and the quarter-mile. A great deal of friendly rivalry had arisen with regard to tug-of-war. The Bedfords had got a very good team, but the principal

value of it was in having old Cressingham to coach them and to captain them. We made several attempts to beat them, but each time we signally failed. Each battalion in turn said that they were really going to beat them each time they took them on, but the result was always the same. All these sports and amusements had a very good effect in pulling together the new troops and they saw that they were at once welcomed in amongst us.

On the 27th August we went into the line. It was rather a trying piece to take over, because we were introduced to quite a new feature of warfare in the shape of mines and counter-mines—a most uncomfortable feeling knowing that there was somebody trying to burrow underneath you and blow you up.

The time spent in the place we were (Givenchy) was a very dull unexciting time. The moment that we got into the line we were told by the mining experts that the place was highly dangerous, that the Boche had mined under us, and that it might go up at any moment. Very pleasant news this for us to hear; so that a great deal of the ground had to be given up, or rather, very lightly held.

The experts had formed this opinion from noises that they had heard, and which they made certain were German; but it afterwards transpired that what they had heard were our own people mining, and, as a matter of fact, the Boches were not anywhere near us. Apart from the uncomfortable feeling that this mining creates, it is also extremely annoying to constantly find working parties carrying away their beastly bags. I am sorry that while we were in this piece one of our battalions had a raid which did not come

off successfully. It was a lesson to us never to go into things hurriedly, or to do them without very carefully having rehearsed them beforehand.

About the 14th of September we were told that very likely we should be sent down, in the immediate future, to Vimy and take part in the attack there.

By this time we had got our organisation all right again, and though nothing like what we were before, we still were ready to give a good account of ourselves.

On the 15th I went down and reconnoitred the whole of the Vimy piece that we were by way of taking, and very much liked the scheme on the whole, although there was one minor point which would have required re-adjusting—a question of the left flank of our attack. We went into it on the ground very thoroughly indeed, and came back full of confidence that we could do some good work there; but having got all our plans ready, and having worked far into the night to do so, just after one had gone to bed—something like 2 o'clock in the morning—we were told that that was all off, and that we were to go down to the Somme once more.

We were all very pleased to be getting out of this horrible country in which we were, and quite ready to have another go at the Boche; but, personally, I was rather disappointed that we were not going to take on the Vimy business.

We were all very pleased that Thompson, of the 17th Battalion, got the Russian Order, which nearest corresponds to our V.C. He was a most excellent lad and right well did he earn it. Alas! he was so badly wounded that there was no hope of our seeing him with us again.

## CHAPTER XX.

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RETURN TO THE SOMME. A HORRIBLE  
TIME. PREPARATION FOR ATTACK.  
THE ATTACK IN FRONT OF LIGNY TILLOY.  
SUBSEQUENT ATTACK BY 21ST BRIGADE.

About this time we moved back out of the line and we went to the Busnes area. But this was only to be for a short time, and we proceeded on the 21st to Vignacourt—very near where we had been in the early stages after our arrival in France. Here we proceeded to train for our new push.

We were led to believe that this would, in all probability, be the taking of the village of Ligny Tilloy. This was all presupposing that the ground up to this place had been taken by our people before we arrived there.

We devoted a considerable time during our stay at Vignacourt to training in village fighting, and really one was very pleased indeed with the way our new lads shaped.

There was at this time in the mind of the Divisional Commander the idea of sending back the 18th Battalion to us and taking away the Bedfords. We discussed the matter from all points of view, and eventually he came to the conclusion that it was better to leave things as they were. I should have liked to have had the 18th back again, but I should have been very sorry to part with the Bedfords, and unfortunately they would not have allowed our Brigade to consist of five battalions whilst another one consisted of three.

We were all very happy during our stay at Vignacourt, in spite of the fact that the people there were decidedly inhospitable and were constantly making difficulties about billets. It is so extraordinary in France how, in one place, you are welcomed with open arms, and five miles away from it you are looked upon with suspicion and every obstacle put in the way of friendly relationship. They did not seem to realise that we had come from our own country and given up everything in order to save them. The fact of the matter was that a good many of them had not felt the pinch of war at all, and in some of these districts all the peasants think of is to get money out of British pockets.

"David," having been put away during our northern trip, was resurrected again and was invaluable to many people.

We had our first experience of bombs at Vignacourt. The Germans came over and dropped two or three, but they did no harm.

The idea had been that we were to go to the XIV Corps, under Lord Cavan, and we were much looking forward to this and to having an opportunity of serving under him ; but at the last moment this was changed, and we went to the XV. Corps instead.

On the 4th October we moved up by 'bus to the Ribemont area, preparatory to our going into the line. This was our first experience of moving the whole Brigade by 'bus—a somewhat costly amusement. We heard great tales about it being quite a pleasure-outing now fighting the Boche, as compared with what it was

. We had all set our hearts on being first

into Bapaume, which could be very clearly seen from our lines, but we were not to get possession of this town for very many months.

We were in high spirits now, because all that we heard tended to make one think that the enemy were really getting on to their last legs, and that they were having difficulties with regard to ammunition and food stuffs. As regards men, he seemed to have plenty of them, but they were nothing like the class he was able to put into the field earlier in the year. It was at this time thought that he would abandon this piece of the line and take up a shorter one a little further back, but this was not to take place till much later.

On the 4th of October a party of commanding officers and myself went off to the line where we were to go in. We passed through many places that one knew so well by name, and some of them by sight—Montauban, Longueval, Bernafay Wood and High Wood, and Flers. It was impossible to describe the absolute state of desolation of all this country. As for the ground, it was so pitted with shell holes that you could not walk a yard without being able to touch one with your stick, and there were some terribly gruesome sights to be seen. Not the least interesting thing was that we could see Bapaume quite clearly in the distance. It was a grand day for seeing, and when the sun got on to it the church stood out in a most extraordinary way. We learned as much as we could about Ligny Tilloy, but it was rather difficult to glean anything definite and the place itself could hardly be seen as it lies rather in a hole. There had been a certain amount of rain and the mud was something awful. The roads were all cut to pieces and practically impassable for

motors—in fact, we had to leave ours a long way back, partly because of the state of the roads and partly because of the enormous amount of traffic on them, the result being that you could only go at a walking pace. When we were up in the line we heard many accounts of how the Boche was not fighting nearly as well as he did, and that he surrendered fairly freely. All this was very comforting.

The great topic at this time was the success or failure of the Tanks. They had just made their appearance over this particular piece of ground, and one could see several derelict ones lying there. Opinions seemed fairly divided as to whether they were of any use, or the contrary.

The weather at this time had fairly broken and was making all movement extremely difficult. It was bad enough for us, but the gunners had appalling difficulties in getting up their ammunition. When it does rain in this country, it certainly does it with a vengeance.

Lord Derby turned up on the 7th and, as luck would have it, the whole Brigade had been collected for General Shea to speak to them before going into the show. So he got a good opportunity of seeing them. I remember they looked very well and one was very proud of them.

The Cavalry—or at least a considerable number of them—were camped quite close to our place; but they could have packed up their things and gone off home for all the good that they could do this year. The country was in such a state as to be quite impossible for them to move.

On the 10th we moved up into the line and we were to be ready to take part in an attack. We moved

up very early in the morning, and the whole thing was rather difficult.

Of course everything about the line now was so very indefinite, and the situation changed so rapidly, that it was very hard to get anything cut and dry. The people who were in the line before us had made an attack but, through no fault of their own, not very much progress had been made. Exactly where the line was, was rather hard to define, and as a result any plans for the attack were rather sketchy. We went into quite a different part of the line than we had been told to go into only the day before, but that sort of thing we were getting quite used to now, and we did not worry our heads about a trifle of that description.

On the 12th we had more difficulties about the exact location of our line. It seemed very hard indeed to actually fix it on the map. The result was that we suffered very considerably from the effects of our own heavy artillery fire. We were warned when we came in first of all that there was a great deal of short shooting, but we certainly never expected anything like what we got at that time. It seemed absolutely useless to complain and to ask the heavy gunners to increase their range. The only answer that one always got was that they were not shooting at all. I know from practical experience that they were our own guns which were shooting and which were causing us quite a considerable number of casualties. The fault lay at that time from the fact that the heavy gunners would not send their F.O.O.'s far enough forward, but were content to observe from right back. This has all been altered now, and they are most dashing in this respect.

On the night of the 11th the 20th Battalion did quite a smart piece of work. There was not sufficient accommodation for them in the assembly positions, so they were kept back and moved up during the night, and dug in on a line which had been previously reconnoitred. By first thing on the morning of the 12th they were well down. They had suffered very few casualties—practically none—and their position had not been observed.

*Extract from diary dated October 14th, 1916 :—*

Well, we have had our helping, and the poor old 17th Battalion caught it very hot from machine guns, losing about 13 officers and 400 men. The Bedfords, too, came in for a very bad time, losing about 10 officers and 250 men. Altogether we lost about 26 officers and 1,000 men, and, alas! very little to show for it. It was all in the ordinary course of events and no one whatever was to blame; only that we ran up against a very stiff proposition.

What happened was this. A general push was arranged on a long front, some miles on either side of us—we are no longer next to our old friends, the French. We went through all the formalities of a heavy bombardment and then attacked yesterday afternoon. The very second we put on our barrage the Boches put on theirs at once. It was marvellous. But in a few minutes our fellows had got out of their trenches and were going for them. These d——d Boches have been extremely clever and the siting of their line is very good.

Immediately we were in the open they opened on us with machine guns and fairly mowed our men down. It was simply terrible, and all the harm was done in a few minutes.

I fear that in a good many places it was much the same thing—in fact in no place did I hear that we had got on. It was a great disappointment, as we had hoped for rather big things that day.

All our lads did splendidly and fought right well and with rare pluck, but it was too much for them. We got on just a little bit, but nothing to write home about.

Although there is really nothing much to write about, it has been a very trying time, and now, to finish up with, they are pouring over gas shells, making us put on our beastly helmets—stinking things. These Boches are putting up a very good fight, and we have “our brave Brandenburghers” in front of us, so we’ve got about the best of them to deal with.

I do wish our fellows could have had a great success yesterday. It would have done them all the good in the world, being practically a new Brigade since July. But now they only have the satisfaction of knowing that they have done very well, but no success to buck about.

It’s been very hard work on everyone building up this new lot, but there it is, and now, I suppose, we’ve got to start it all over again. Poor Peck is greatly distressed over his losses, but it was through no fault of his, or of anybody else—just the fortune of war.

The little bit of ground that the Bedfords gained on that day was, in fact, the only gain that was made by the whole army, and was of very considerable importance, as it gave observation over ground which could not possibly be seen, and came in for notice in the newspaper accounts, where they said : “The most important point gained during the day was the command of a

valley running towards Bapaume from a point north-west of Gueudecourt." As usual, the Bedfords did splendidly and fought right well for this small gain, and having got it, proceeded to dig in in their usual fashion, the result being that when the time came to hand over to someone else, they handed over an extremely good trench, but unfortunately, soon afterwards, this was only to be demolished by our own heavy artillery.

On the night of the 13th October, having had our helping, we were taken out and moved back a short distance, our places being taken by the 21st Brigade.

The Boche was all this time using gas pretty freely, and this made our getting out rather a difficult thing, but it was satisfactorily accomplished, although the whole lot were not out until 6-30 in the morning of the 14th. Our resting place was the bare ground—no accommodation whatever except what we could make for ourselves out of the debris lying on the ground. It was blowing hard, had rained nearly always, and it was bitterly cold. Altogether we did not have a very happy rest. I don't think we ever blessed the Comforts Committee as we blessed them at this time. Not only were they keeping us extremely well supplied with socks and other forms of clothing, but they had sent out to us what proved to be absolutely invaluable, and that was consolidated alcohol, or, as they were more generally known as, "Tommies' Cookers." This allowed the men to have hot food in most exposed places—exposed either to the weather or to the Boche; and without lighting a fire they could always get a hot meal. They were absolutely the saving of the men, and it was impossible to sufficiently express our gratitude to those at home for their forethought and kindness in sending them out to us.

Our rest was not to be a long one, and on the 16th we again went into the line and held a piece on the right of the 21st Brigade. They were going to do a push, but we were not to take any part in it, except sit down and get the retaliation which one always does on the flank of any attack.

The 21st Brigade carried out their attack on the 18th, and unfortunately it ended in the same way as ours had done—in fact, rather worse. No ground whatever was made. We had had some experience as to how the Boche was defending this line, and thought that our experience might have been profited by. We strongly advised that the attack should not take place in the same way as ours had, but this advice was not taken. Worse luck! I believe if we had had the doing of it again, and had tried completely different tactics, we should have been successful.

Our fellows came in for a goodish lot of strafing from the Boche, but they suffered far worse from our own heavy artillery, which persisted in shooting, not only at the trenches, but behind them. In vain did we represent this to higher authority, but with the same result.

During the attack of the 21st Brigade we had an opportunity of judging, to a certain extent, of the work of the Tanks. From my Headquarters the whole thing was clearly visible. Four Tanks were by way of operating, but of these four only two got anywhere near the scene of operations, and of these two only one took any active part. He, I must say, appeared to do good work, but the others were futile.

The weather had been awful, pouring with rain and the whole place was an absolute sea of mud. The

difficulties of getting about were worse than we have ever had. It took the 19th Battalion eleven hours to be relieved and by that time the men were absolutely done to a turn. The 20th Battalion had a terrible experience in relieving one of their companies in the front line. They only had a very short distance to go, but it took them most of the night to do this and, in fact, they had the greatest difficulty in getting there at all. The only thing to do under these conditions was, if you had got hold of a dry place stay in it and not try to move about. The Boche had certainly strengthened up his artillery very much in this piece and could, if he wanted, send over a fair amount of stuff, though not as much as we gave him.

We were moved out of the line on the 22nd and right glad we were to come out. It had been our most uncomfortable and our most unpleasant time during the whole of our service in France.

It was satisfactory to know that, although we had not been able to do very much in this push, we still were able to take and hand over a bit of ground, which kept up our record to date.

We were relieved by the Australians, who had just come from Egypt. We heartily pitied them having to come into this horrible piece of the line in such terrible weather.

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CHAPTER XXI.

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OUR NEW SECTOR OPPOSITE BERLES.  
PEACE TIME WARFARE. "THE OPTIMISTS"  
AND OTHER LUXURIES. DEPARTURE  
OF COLONEL COBHAM. CHRISTMAS.

On the 30th October we went into the line opposite Bienvillers and Berles—a very good piece of line and a great rest after what we had been through. Altogether it did not look like a bad place for us to go into winter quarters, and we were extremely thankful that we were there instead of having to go into that awful Flanders again.

As soon as we arrived in our new district we started to try and make ourselves as comfortable as possible, and within a very short time really everything was very nice indeed. In addition to what we had always had before in the way of canteens and theatres wherever possible, we now added the luxury of an Officers' Club, and this at once became a most popular institution. It was our object to make it as home-like as possible and to give the fellows all kinds of conveniences which they would not be able otherwise to get. In connection with this we ran officers' baths, and I feel sure that all who have had those baths will be extremely grateful for them, even to the present day.

We started our club originally at Pommiers. It was a little distressing that, having with great difficulty bought glass for the windows, the very first day a Boche shell came along and blew the whole lot out. It was

the first one that had been seen in the place for weeks or months. However, we were not to be daunted by this kind of thing, and everything was put straight with the firm determination to make ourselves thoroughly comfortable.

Pommier became attended to by the Boche rather more frequently owing to the fact that some of our own big guns had planted themselves down on the edge of it, and the club was eventually moved back to Humbercamps. This we made into our recreation centre, and had a theatre, sergeants' mess, canteen and every other kind of luxury. This rather created a stir in higher circles, because we were able to make it really extremely comfortable, and many were the visits from superior authorities to see how, with a little bit of trouble, the lot of both officers and men could be improved.

In the beginning of November the weather was extremely bad and unfortunately was affecting our trenches very considerably. They were all falling in and getting in a dreadful state. However, one could only plug on and try to improve them ; added to which the Boche had been rather impertinent lately, putting quite a considerable amount of stuff over.

Our only excitement was when, on November 16th, one of the latest pattern of German aeroplanes was brought down quite close to our Headquarters. The air people were very pleased at getting it. They told me that they had been very anxious to get one, but had not up till then been successful. Personally, I don't think that the aeroplane was brought down at all. I believe that the man really deserted and came down of his own accord. His machine was credited

with being one that Boelcke always flew and, as such, was a very speedy one. There certainly were no signs of any damage on the captured machine, and the machine that went after him, and was supposed to have brought him down, was like a four-wheeler compared to a Rolls Royce.

Amongst our other amusements we started a string band, which was most useful—particularly during the winter months when the evenings were so long and we had to rely on indoor amusements. They really were quite excellent and very much appreciated by all who heard them.

I have hardly made any mention up till now of our entertainers, "The Optimists." They were a sort of Pierrot troupe originally got up for the benefit of the 17th Battalion in the very early days—as early as our first Christmas. In the summer of 1916, having discussed the matter with Colonel Peck, it was decided that they should be taken over, lock, stock and barrel, by the Brigade, instead of their being a battalion show, and that we should have all of the arranging as regards their performances and who they should go and play to. Also, that we should have the transporting of them, and, in fact, that they should be attached to Brigade Headquarters. It was to be clearly understood that these fellows should not simply be used for entertainment purposes, but when the question came of work of a military nature they were to take their share just as much as anybody else. This throughout they have done most willingly; in fact, they made it a point of honour that any job they were given to do should be carried out more than well. It did not matter what it was; whether it was the forming of dumps or acting

as runners, or innumerable other jobs of that description, they always earned a good name for themselves. The same remark also applies to the band, which had exactly the same spirit.

During all this time, when we were holding the line in this sector, there was very little of general interest to report. We were having a comparatively quiet time. Our chief difficulty was keeping the trenches in anything like decent order. The weather was bad and the trenches were not properly revetted. In fine weather they were delightful, but since it had become wet all the sand-bags slipped in and the result was an awful mess.

About the beginning of December superior authority decreed that there should be a bombardment at Monchy. For what reason we do not know, but this was undertaken in a very thorough manner and on one day alone the Boche in that village must have been somewhat surprised to receive no less than 58,000 shells. We were all somewhat sceptical as to the damage to personnel that this caused. We had a shrewd idea that they lived pretty safely underground and that it wouldn't hurt them very much. We were to suffer for this later on. At first the Boche paid no attention whatever to this and did not retaliate at all. In the middle of December we undertook a small raid on the Boche trenches, for which we had been practising for some time. This worked out fairly successfully.

Just about this time, the hard work that he had done was affecting Colonel Cobham's health, and it was apparent that he must have a rest. This was the last time that we were to see him in command of one of our battalions, because, before he returned from the

month's leave that he got, he was appointed to the command of a Brigade.

Our patrolling during this time was very active indeed and we had obtained complete mastery of No Man's Land. In fact, at nights the whole place was full of our people wandering about regardless of the Boche. Our patrols seemed to do just exactly as they pleased and wandered across to his trenches with the greatest impunity.

About the 20th December things as regards the Boche considerably livened up, and we took it that this was in return for the attentions which we had been paying him. He raided the people just on our right, but I am glad to say that we were able to give them full notice that this was going to take place, and they were able to deal with it most satisfactorily.

On the 24th December the enemy did what was, no doubt, the commencement of his retaliation for our shelling of Monchy. In the afternoon of that day he suddenly, with no warning, pumped in about 500 shells into Berles. Really big stuff some of it was; there was no doubt that some of his guns were 8 inch. It was very satisfactory, however, that owing to precautions that we had taken about getting underground in this village, we practically had no casualties at all. I dare say that with him it was practically the same during our bombardment of Monchy. This form of retaliation he kept up for many days afterwards, although on the 25th December, being Christmas Day, he never fired a shot at all.

This constant bombardment of Berles was very annoying to us, and I think on the whole that, as regards causing inconvenience, he had the best of the

deal, although every time a shell was thrown we retaliated on one or other of his villages. The Corps Commander backed us up well in this, and on several occasions when the gunners were going to put over a certain amount, he ordered that amount to be largely increased.

Christmas was spent in really a very comparatively happy way. Steps had been taken in good time to secure ample provisions for our Christmas dinner, and the cost of this was defrayed almost entirely from the funds which the canteen had been able to hand over to the battalions. Altogether we had a very cheery time, in spite of the fact that we were out in France. Those who were there will not easily forget the annual football match which the Bedfords had between the officers and the sergeants, after a very heavy Christmas dinner. One might say that Cressingham and Sergeant Selby were perhaps the two outstanding features. One must not forget the presence of the butcher of the 17th Battalion who, having finished his labours of dressing pigs for practically the whole Brigade, became an interesting and interested spectator of the game.

Our life certainly had its humorous side. One of the things which was done on Christmas Eve was a patrol of an officer and about ten men of the 19th Battalion went out and established themselves in shell holes just outside the German lines and sang Christmas carols to them. They took the precaution, however, to take a couple of Lewis guns with them in the hopes that the Boche might be induced by their melody to come over and try to fraternize. They were disappointed, however, as they never heard any signs of appreciation whatever.

The rain during the end of the year had been awful and the whole place was simply sodden. It was a most unequal struggle fighting the mud and the water. A piteous message came through one day from one of the Company Commanders saying : " Will you please send a deep sea diver to retrieve the log book, lost in Company Headquarters ? " But, as a matter of fact, the fellows really had a very lucky escape, because a bank had burst and the whole place had been swamped in half a minute—they had barely time to get out.

We were busy at the beginning of the year in practising for another raid to be carried out by the Bedfords, and everything was absolutely ready, but the state of the ground was so deplorable that there was no possibility of their being able to approach the Boche lines without a great deal of noise, so we were told to use our own discretion about the matter, and the raid was off. It was a disappointment because we had got a first-rate party and a very good scheme ; it should have been most successful.

We were very glad to see in the New Year Honours List that Colonel Poyntz and Colonel Rollo both got D.S.O.'s ; Captain Torrey, Military Cross ; Cressingham was promoted to be a Major ; Sergeant-Major Gray, Military Cross, and various others—in fact, it was rather satisfactory to know that every single name that we had sent forward got its reward, although, alas ! the numbers were small.

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CHAPTER XXII.

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OUT OF THE LINE. TRAINING. COLONEL PANET. SPORTS, ETC. HONOURS FROM THE FRENCH. MOVE INTO THE LINE NEAR AGNY. VISIT TO FRENCH SCHOOLS.

We were relieved out of the line on the 7th January and moved back quite a short distance to Halloy and the neighbourhood, with a view to doing the usual training. This, again, was no exception to the rule that during this time one was practically able to do no training at all owing to working parties, etc.

The accommodation was very crowded, but still fairly comfortable, particularly after the wet time we had had in the trenches. I must own that we were very much ashamed of the way in which we handed over those trenches, but the people who took them over from us thoroughly realised that it was through no fault of ours, but that we had been simply beaten by the weather. I believe that even our trenches compared favourably with others at the same time. If we got a spell of dry weather we could make the whole place look quite respectable, and then a few hours of rain would go and make it worse than ever. It really was most disheartening, and if we had had these trenches properly done in the summer time it would have made all the difference in the world to us during the winter. What a pity it is this is never done.

In the middle of January we received a farewell visit from General Cobham, who was just off on his way to take over his Brigade. We were all extremely sorry

to see the last of him, but that sorrow was coupled with pleasure at his having received his well-merited promotion.

After about the second week in January the weather took a turn and, if anything, it became even worse than it was. Instead of rain now we had nothing but snow, and the cold was absolutely intense—so much for our chances of doing any training! The snow was lying deep on the ground, and the wind for days and days was so bitterly cold that the men could hardly handle their rifles. As if this was not enough to stop our chances of training, we were told to find some working parties for widening the line between Doullens and Arras, with a view to the spring offensive. We had to provide no less than 1,200 men per day for works of different descriptions. That practically meant that there was nobody left to train at all. How was one to get the men in the proper state if that sort of thing went on?

On the 21st January the Divisional Commander came and distributed medal ribbons to all who had been recipients of honours, and for this we had a ceremonial parade. I don't mind saying that it was one of the finest little shows I have ever seen, and in spite of the intense cold the way the men stood and handled their arms was wonderful. General Shea was delighted with them, and complimented us in very warm terms.

One of our best men in the Division, and one who had been a very great friend to all of us, was now to leave. This was Colonel Panet, C.R.E. He had been with us since the formation of the Division in the early days at Grantham, and we had all got a very great affection for him. This increased as time went on, and everyone had an opportunity of seeing his good work

because his favourite place was always in the front trench. We have many things to be grateful to him for, and certainly he had the affection and respect of the whole Brigade. He was now to go as Chief Engineer to the 2nd Anzac Corps, and he went with our best wishes for his success.

We were having great difficulty at this time in the way of getting clean clothes. When we were on the Somme the Division had gone to great expense and had bought a laundry and fitted it up most beautifully. It had been one that belonged to the Liverpool Merchants' Mobile Hospital, but had never been used by them, so our Division bought it with funds supplied by all of us. Before it had really got properly running the July offensive had taken place, and we had been taken out of that part of the line. It was too big to be moved about, so it had to be left behind. The result was that again we were without proper accommodation for washing clothes. Things became critical, and the Division sent in to Paris and bought, with the help of Colonel Dive, R.A.M.C. and Captain Torrey, a very useful small laundry.

This washing question had always been a very difficult one, and in some Corps no effort had been made to compete with this difficulty. Surely as they are more or less fixed at one place they ought to run this kind of thing, and not leave it to the Division to do. Some Corps do take upon themselves the responsibility of this, and the result is very welcome to a Division when they come to that Corps, but other Corps do nothing in this respect. Since the time that I am writing about, proper arrangements have been made, and now clean clothes are obtainable from the base—a much better system altogether.

A terrible disaster overwhelmed us when we were at Halloy. Our theatre—in other words, an old barn with a bit of stage and forms in it—suddenly blazed up one night, and in a few minutes the whole thing was gone. We lost everything; our theatrical properties and, last but not least, our piano, which we had only just bought. It was very unfortunate and as a result we had to pay quite heavy damages for the building. However, thanks to their excellence, our "Optimists" were able to get engagements up and down the line, and within a short time were able to make enough money to wipe out that loss.

At the end of January we had a most exciting cross-country race, in which the whole Brigade took part. It was a very close thing between the 20th Battalion K.L.R. and the Bedfords. Although the Bedfords had the two first men in, the 20th Battalion won with 7,770 points against the Bedford's 7,773 points—a most capital race all through.

A gloom was cast on the whole thing by hearing that day that poor little Olley, who had been our champion runner and a great favourite with all of us, had just died from the effects of his wound. He had made a most gallant fight for it, but the poison had got hold of him and, after a struggle, it had got too much for him.

We wound up our time when we were "at rest"—in other words digging for all we were worth—by having a very good boxing show at the Headquarters of the Bedfords. All sorts of distinguished guests attended, including our late Corps Commander of Somme days, General Congreve. Altogether it was a very sporting affair—a good ending to that period.

The cold at this time was awful, and everything was getting frozen up.

On the 1st of February the Divisional Commander rang me up and told me that, in recognition of the work done on the Somme during the July offensive, the French had made the Corps Commander, himself and myself Commandeurs of the Legion of Honour. I must say that this was a very great honour for them to give me, and the Brigade must take it as a compliment to themselves for all the work that they did during that time. I believe I am right in saying that at this time no other Brigadier in command of a Brigade had received that honour.

On the 4th February we started to move up into our new piece of the line which was to be in front of Agny—just south of Arras. There had been several alterations as to the place that we were to go to, but eventually this one was decided upon.

It was not at all a bad piece of the line. In fact, seeing it, as we did, in a very hard frost and everything naturally quite dry, we certainly did not see the worst of it. It was the intention that we should hold this line and eventually attack from it in the Spring.

I had been detailed by the Corps as one of the two officers to go on a visit to the French military schools about this time. It was a most interesting trip, though really there was not very much to learn—in fact, in a good many ways our own Divisional schools and Army schools were just as good, if not better, than theirs. But still there were certain tips to be picked up, and apart from that I think we may say that we established a very good feeling between the French and ourselves. Certainly they were most hospitable and did everything

that they could to make our trip an interesting one, and finally deposited us within some fifteen miles off Paris—a very delicate attention in itself. We were much impressed with the young classes of men coming on—lads of about 18. They looked extremely fine material and certainly had very good spirit and were undergoing a first-rate training.

On the 16th of February General Shea and I went to Army Headquarters to receive our decorations from General Nivelle, commanding the French forces in the Field. It was a most trying affair, having to be solemnly kissed on both cheeks in front of crowds of other officers, who were standing by and plainly showed their amusement at the performance. However we had to put up with all sorts of things in these times.

Our piece of the line up till the 18th was very fairly quiet as regards the Boche, but about this time he livened up very considerably. We had one battalion in Arras itself, in most magnificent billets. In fact, they were living in the best residential part of the town. The whole place was pretty badly knocked about though, particularly round the Cathedral. It was simply heart-rending to see this. It must have been a very fine place, but now it was all knocked to pieces; half the walls were gone, no roof and, in fact, a mass of ruins absolutely beyond repair. Walking through the town in the day time was like walking through a city of the dead, there being strict orders given that men were not to walk about in the day time unnecessarily, and the result was one never saw a soul. After dark, however, everybody came out, and the result was that the streets were absolutely packed. I have heard it said that there was some 30,000 troops in Arras at that time.

I am sorry to say that we had at this time rather an unfortunate affair, when a heavy minenwerfer fell plump on the top of one of our company headquarters. The place had appeared quite safe, but this was too much for it and the whole thing was knocked in. There were two officers in there at the time. One was got out alive, but very much shaken, and the other one—Bolton, of the 19th Battalion K.L.R.—unfortunately could not be got to in time to save his life.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

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### OUR NEW PIECE. PREPARATIONS FOR SPRING OFFENSIVE. DEPARTURE OF THE BOCHE AND OUR ADVANCE.

The whole of our time now was taken up in preparing for the Spring offensive. We were now more or less accustomed to this kind of thing, and the result was that we got through our work in good time—in fact long before the day that had been named as being the day when it was all to be completed. We had got everything ready down to the smallest details. Good headquarters had been constructed for battalions and companies and a headquarters, the magnificence of which filled me with shame, had been made by the R.E. for the Brigade. We had learned from our experience on July 1st that it paid us very well to get through our work and have a few days easy before the final day. We therefore repeated this operation, or rather we should have repeated it, only subsequent events rather altered the whole of our arrangements.

By the middle of March we were very much interested in what was going on further down south, where the Boche was voluntarily giving up ground, and our interest was increased as this gradually crept up the line. Eventually, about the 17th, there was no doubt that he was going to "off it" in front of us. Villages had been seen in flames and all sorts of dull explosions had been heard. So certain were we that he was going to retire that on that day I went in to the Division to ask General Shea if we might not push him out that night. He would

have liked to, and got on to the Corps and asked them if he might, but the answer came back to say that we were not to. From our line we could see no less than five villages burning, and the blowing up of dug-outs that night along the whole front was incessant. What he must have used in explosives is something incredible. We had out good strong patrols all through the night, but these reported that the enemy's line was still well held. On each occasion they had been shot at, and, in fact, in one case the patrol had actually been driven back. It was quite clear that the retirement was gradually creeping up from the south, and early on the morning of the 18th we heard that he had left part of the line next to us, and that some of the next Brigade had got into his trenches. Our fellows were over at once and found them just leaving—in fact, they saw considerable numbers of them going over the sky line.

At this time the 21st Brigade had gone out of the line, and we were holding the entire Divisional front, *i.e.*, a two-Brigade front.

The advance was carried out in excellent order, but it was certainly a very rapid one. We met with practically no opposition and the result was that we left the Brigades on our right and left far behind. So much so that, both our flanks being in the air, much to their disgust we had to stop our lads. However, before doing so we had occupied Mercatel and the ground north and east of it.

The people on our flank did not come into the line with us until 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 19th. It was just as well that the Boche did not discover this as otherwise we might have had a very warm time and have had to give up our very advanced positions.

The Brigadier on my right was very nice about the whole thing and explained the whole situation. Of course they had a considerably further distance to come than we had. However, by the 19th we had a good line established.

It is impossible to convey to anyone who has not seen it the state to which the enemy had reduced the whole of the country. As regards his trenches, he had blown up every single dug-out, smashed in all his machine gun emplacements, O.P.'s., etc. He had demolished everything except his wire entanglements, and of these there were belts without number of extraordinary width and thickness. These were intact, and I can only thank Heaven that we did not have to attack through this wire. It would have taken us months of wire-cutting.

Apart from his trenches, he had set himself to destroy everything. What remained of the villages had been blown up ; there was not a single house standing higher than about three feet. Every tree had been cut down ; he had not even spared the gooseberry and currant bushes. The roads and bridges were all blown up. In fact, we have always given him the utmost credit for his thoroughness and this wholesale destruction was one of his masterpieces. He even went so far as to arrange all kinds of booby traps with bombs and explosives of various kinds. There was no souvenir hunting on this occasion—it was far too dangerous an amusement.

It was very interesting to look back from his lines and see how much he could observe us. It was rather a revelation to us who, if we had been in his place, would certainly have given him a very much warmer time.

For the first time during our service in France we actually saw cavalry, both his and ours, moving about in quite large numbers on the field of battle. We could see large numbers of the enemy infantry moving about in the neighbourhood of the Hindenburg Line, and our impression was that we had advanced much more rapidly than he had ever expected we should, as there was no doubt that he was still doing a lot of work on that line. The unfortunate part was that our advance had been so rapid that we had out-distanced our own guns and we could not bring any fire to bear upon the groups of men that we saw working. However, that was soon rectified.

It was a great joy to us to get out of those beastly trenches and to be having something in the nature of open warfare—a thing that we have always longed for and which we saw so little hope of getting. Naturally our spirits were of the highest and everybody was longing to have a go at him. We were all much impressed with the strength of the line which he had voluntarily given up, and the great use that he had made of concrete. He really is a most industrious person, and one is forced to admit that our work does not compare with his. It was rather a gruesome sight in No Man's Land, just in front of our line. We found any number of Frenchmen lying dead who had been there since we do not know how long. I am afraid they must have suffered very heavily in these parts.

After holding this line for a few days we were taken out for a short time about the 21st. We had been holding a line of about 3,000 yards—a very long piece to look after and feed, etc.



[Photo Raccon]

Capt. E. SEYMOUR.



[Photo Barrett]

Lt.-Col. G. ROLLO.



It was a heartrending sight to see some of the French peasants coming back to their villages and trying to find out what had happened to their homes, but they found the whole place unrecognizable. No wonder they were very bitter ; and if they do ever get into German territory there is no question about their having an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

On the 27th we moved back a little further and were by way of having some ten days before going up into the line again, preparatory to an attack. We all realized that this would, no doubt, be a desperate affair, as it meant going for their much-vaunted Hindenburg line, or, as they called it now, the Siegfried line.

The weather was now again very bad and the roads had got into a terrible state. Of course they had only been meant for a reasonable kind of traffic ; but now, day and night, all sorts of heavy traffic, lorries, guns, etc., were coming up and down. Our period, which was intended to be for training and rest, was, as usual, made up in finding working parties principally for the mending of roads. To make matters worse, on the 3rd March it snowed very heavily and then froze, making the roads impassable.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

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### THE TAKING OF ST. MARTIN-SUR-COJEUL. LOSS OF COLONEL POYNTZ. ATTACK ON SIEGFRIED LINE. WE MOVE BACK. A CELEBRATED DINNER.

On the 7th of April we started to move up again into the line. During all this time the Boche was being heavily bombarded by our guns of all descriptions, and his position must have been a decidedly uncomfortable one. We were frequently up in the line, and it appeared to all of us that our gunners were paying more attention to the objective on the left than they were to the piece we had got to attack.

On the 8th of April we carried out a most successful little show. There was a village in front of the "Siegfried" line called St. Martin-sur-Cojeul. This was held by the enemy as a sort of outpost to their main line, and it was necessary to clear this of the Boche before we could carry out our main attack. The whole country was very much exposed and any movement of troops clearly visible to the enemy. Therefore, this undertaking had to be in the form of a night operation.

The task was allotted to the Bedfords, and in their usual style they made it into a very neat little success. We captured quite a nice lot of prisoners at a not excessive loss to ourselves. At the same time we were having a joint enterprise with the 21st Brigade on our left against two mills. These were held rather more strongly than we had anticipated, and the result was that we could not secure them.

Unfortunately at this time the strain and the exposure had been too much for Colonel Poyntz, who had been unwell for many months. In fact, I remember him, in January, 1916, having to go home and consult a specialist on an old trouble from which he suffered. He had carried on in a most magnificent way, every day getting rather worse, but at the same time fighting against it with his usual pluck. The day before the attack on St. Martin I saw him, and it was very clear that he could not last much longer. He insisted on going up into the line, to have the final reconnaissance before the attack, and when he came back from that, struggle as he might, he was forced to give in.

His loss to us was a very serious matter, particularly at this time, but it could not be helped and we had to make the best of it. During the whole time that he was with us I have only had one row with him, and that was about two or three days before he had to go "sick." Anybody could see that his health was failing, and I told him that it would be better for him to stay out of the line this time and spare himself a bit. On that, he flew into a passion and fairly told me off. We have often laughed over the incident since—I never knew he could be so fierce.

Our idea that we had advanced at a more rapid rate than the Boche had anticipated was confirmed by an officer who had been captured. They had not expected us against the Siegfried line for another ten days.

The next operation was to be the attack on the Siegdried line itself, and for a description of this I will quote from my journal, written about that ♦

April the 13th, 1917 :—

Now to try and give something like a coherent account of what has happened during the last four days ; but, to tell the truth, I am so brain-weary that I find it very difficult, even though we have done no fighting since yesterday morning.

The last entry was telling you about the taking of St. Martin—which was a very satisfactory little show, though the one on our left was not. Our main point was St. Martin ; the other was the taking of two mills which had been bothering us a little and which was going to interfere with our forming-up places. The Brigade on our left was to take the principal mill, and we were just going to help them. It was thought that we could easily manage it, but, as a matter of fact, we were all badly held up by several machine guns and, as it afterwards transpired, sixty of the enemy were there.

The morning of the 9th came, and at 5-30 a.m. we were to attack. On the night of the 8th we had got our men into their forming up trenches in rather sunken roads and any bit of cover we could find, with orders that they were not on any account to show themselves. They lay absolutely still, and I am sure the Boche never expected anything at all. My forming up places were very difficult, as they were so scattered that it meant working out exactly the time the rear ones had to advance so as to get in their proper place at the right time, and advance with the leading waves. It seems incredible, but some of the back ones had to advance 5,000 yards before they caught up the leading waves, and then, after that, they had to go forward another 800 yards to attack.

When I said that we had to attack at 5-30, that perhaps was not quite correct. Some of the troops away on our left had to start then, but we were considerably later—in fact, about 3-30 p.m.

I went up on to a hill at 5-30 a.m. to see the start, and it was really magnificent. Light was just beginning to come when suddenly there came a roar of artillery and hundreds and hundreds of flashes could be seen. The Boche at once started sending up flares and rockets all over the place, and, in fact, it was like a stupendous fireworks show.

So it went on all day till it came to the turn of our Division to take our share. We could see that things were going satisfactorily and pretty well up to time.

The 21st Brigade had to go on and we had to go in about half an hour later on our piece. They (the 21st Brigade) got hung up by uncut wire and machine guns, and certainly one of their battalions had a terrible time. They were simply mown down by the infernal machine guns—there was very little shelling at all.

Well, with them hung up, there did not seem very much chance of our getting in, but we had to have a jolly good try, and if it succeeded then it would help the 21st, and also if we had not gone, the Division on our right would not have been able to go.

I was very uneasy about the wire being cut and so was Shea. In fact, we had a long talk about it and eventually, on the night of the 8th, I sent in a telegram stating we were not satisfied it had been cut properly, and asked for all the "heavies" possible to be turned on to it. This was done, and we had more favourable reports before we started to attack. I found out after-

wards that on most of our front the wire was so well sited that, although we thought we could see the front line, it was the "support" line we were looking at, and the front line was just behind the crest of a little rise in the ground.

Well, they went forward magnificently, as also did the 21st Division on our right. They had to go up a long gradual slope, and I am told it was a wonderful spectacle, those lines of men all steadily advancing.

I had an officer, Macready, in a very advanced position, with a telephone laid to it. At first he telephoned that we had got in and were advancing to the support line. This report was backed up by all the F.O.O.'s.—but, alas! they had fallen into the same trap as we had, and instead of being through the first line, the men had just disappeared over this rise in the ground and were lost to view.

It appears that when they came within a reasonable distance of the Boche line a hellish machine gun fire was opened on them, and they suffered pretty heavy casualties. They were able to see that it was impossible to get through the wire, so they dug in like mad just where they were, some of them right up against the Boche wire, not more than 150 yards away. They hung on till night came.

In the meantime the Division on our right practically found the same thing. All near our side they could not get near the wire, but on the top of the hill a small party did succeed, but they were only very few. However, they established themselves and were determined to hold on.

When it became dark enough we had to have a regular re-sorting of the Brigade. The 19th were a

bit withdrawn—they had suffered pretty heavily—and altogether we got into some kind of formation.

The next morning (the 10th) we got orders that we were to be ready to attack again the next day. Shea and I had a talk about it and we both agreed that it was doomed to failure if we tried it again against this uncut wire; but it was an order that we were to do it, so he told me to make my plans.

Well, I decided that it was no use asking too much, so instead of trying to get all the wire on our front cut, I chose two places each side of the river (Cojeul), and all the guns were to concentrate on these two places and cut lanes. Then we were to go through those lanes with a reasonable amount of men, and afterwards spread outwards and bomb down the trenches. This appeared more or less possible, and all the "heavies" were turned on (the field guns could not cut the wire at that distance). That night it was reported that two lanes were cut all right—another mistake, because I found afterwards that practically it was not damaged, and it was only where they had put new wire and it did not shew in comparison with the old rusty stuff.

That night the Division on our left (the 21st Brigade having been withdrawn because they were squeezed out) reported that they had reached and taken the Wancourt line, just where it touched my boundary. I knew that this was not so, and eventually it was proved that they had not got it and were 700 yards from it. They pushed on a bit that night and got a little bit closer, but did not succeed in getting right there.

The next morning, the 11th, we were to attack at 6 o'clock. It was a bitterly cold night and snowed quite a lot, much to my horror, as the only place for

my fellows to form up was in the open about 400 yards from the Boche. How they were not spotted I have no idea, but, sure enough, they were not shot at at all.

I forgot to say that on the day of our first attack four Tanks were to help, but none of them appeared at all. However, more about them later.

Thank Heaven, our men were not spotted, and when they had to advance there had been no casualties. It was a gamble—no! I hate the word; one had to take risks, and that was one.

The time came and they advanced, the Division on our right going at the same time. As soon as they got close to the wire the machine guns opened and it was absolutely impossible to go on. They lay down and dug in where they were.

And now comes a thrilling part. We got a message to say that a Tank was coming over the hill, followed immediately by another. Then we heard that the Boches were running like hares, whereupon I turned all the guns on to where they were, *i.e.*, Heninel. We must have done a lot of harm to them, because they were seen by all the F.O.O.'s. After the Tanks had played about a bit, our gallant lads made another effort, but with the same result. As a matter of fact, the 20th Battalion made six efforts, but each time with the same result. What happened was that each time the Tank approached, the machine gunners got down into their dug-outs, and when it had passed they immediately reappeared. The Tanks reported that they had been repeatedly fired at by machine guns, but could not locate them. Well, the Tanks walked up and down their lines, but the result was always the same, whenever we tried to get across the wire, up came the machine

guns. The Bedfords tried repeatedly, but all no good. I was walking over the ground yesterday and I met a couple of them. I was awfully touched ; they said : " We did try, Sir, not once, but over and over again, but we couldn't do it."

Then I sent a message to one of the Tanks (by this time we had four of them playing about on our front) that he was to walk up and down the wire. This he proceeded to do. Then we heard that the front trench was simply teeming with Boches, so, being much afraid of a counter-attack, I had to turn on all the guns, telling them to be careful of our gallant Tank. The way they went was marvellous. As the Tank came along each battery in turn lifted and he was never touched. It was a beautiful bit of work.

It now became quite clear that there was no chance of getting into the trenches as things were, and I was quite at my wits end. All of these gallant lads were getting worn out when, about 5 p.m., we heard that the Division on our left had got into the trenches and would bomb down. This they did, and it was the Queen Victoria Rifles—a most splendid performance. They came right down our front, and the Boches fled. Then you should have heard the guns ; they simply poured stuff on to them. It was grand. After that it was plain sailing.

Then came the question of what next to do. The Division on our right had been hopelessly hung up and couldn't get on a yard, so we thought we'd do the same thing by them.

Our other Brigade had been in reserve and had had nothing to do, whereas our own lads were absolutely played out ; so Shea gave me a battalion, and they

started off, about 11 p.m., and proceeded to bomb down the whole of the other Division's front—but it was not until 8 a.m. that Lascelles, whom I had sent up to help organise and get a move on, telephoned to me: "We have got the top of the hill and the Boches are running like hares." We then had the satisfaction of sending to the people on our right: "We have cleared the whole of your front, and should be pleased if you would take it over."

We don't take credit for this; they were hung up, as we had been, and this was the only way the trench could be taken without enormous loss of life.

The cold was appalling, with a lot of snow and rain. Really the men are wonderful, and when I went up yesterday morning they were as ever. Our casualties were about 500, as far as I can gather—not very many for what they went through. They fought magnificently, as they always do, and are very much bucked with themselves.

I have taken pains to allude very little to the individual battalions because, one and all, they were grand, and there is no differentiating between them.

I am indeed proud of them.

Our casualties during this show were about 500. The day after we had a good look at this "Siegfried" line of theirs, and really it was a wonder that we were able to take it. The trenches were very deep and on our right, in the support trench, there was one long continuous dug-out down about 35 steps and running for certainly not less than 2,000 yards. It was about eight feet wide throughout, and capable of holding any number of men.

The wire was of the thickest type imaginable, and on our front was wholly uncut. The same remark applied to the wire in front of the Division on our right.

On this occasion we made our first acquaintance with what became so well known afterwards—the “pill boxes ;” concrete machine gun emplacements, sticking up only a little bit above the ground. Why these were ever vacated by the enemy I cannot imagine. There was one in our piece which had received a direct hit from a fairly large shell, and it had just chipped it and nothing more. We had studied air photographs of these which had been taken when the snow was on the ground, and we could not imagine what they were. We had come to the conclusion that they were trench mortar emplacements. We knew in future when we saw this kind of thing in the aeroplane photographs. These really were better than the ones we encountered later, as they were nearly flush with the ground.

We moved out of the line on the night of the 10th, and still further back the next day. The men were absolutely dog tired. They had had a very stiff time with the fighting, and besides that, there had been all this period of exposure to the very bad weather. The march back was a very tiring one, and really the men were completely exhausted for the time being.

Our march had just been completed when we received orders that we were to move up again at once to dig just behind the line, and that we were to be there by the evening. The thing was an absolute physical impossibility, but to make sure I went round to each of the battalions and saw the Commanding Officer and the Medical Officer. They were of the same opinion that we could not get them there. I reluctantly, there-

fore, had to send to the Division to say that I could not carry out the order. When I was on my way back from the battalions I met the Army Commander, who was most complimentary about the work and fighting that we had done. I told him of this order that we had received, and he was most sympathetic and said that "If you have not got the men who can do it, very well, don't."

I then went back to my Headquarters, and found General Shea there with the Army Commander. He had motored on whilst I rode back. The Army Commander was extremely nice and we had a most interesting talk. After he had gone, I went into the matter of the working party with General Shea, and explained to him the whole situation. At first he was very anxious that the men should be sent, but when he saw that I was quite firm about it, and that my refusal was not from any idea of obstinacy or trying to get out of the work (I told him that if the men had a night's rest, then they could do it), he took the matter up and backed up the attitude I had adopted.

It was satisfactory that the next morning a general order was sent out from the Headquarters of the 3rd Army saying: "No working parties whatever will be taken from troops who have come back from fighting to rest." I might say that the original order for the working party did not emanate from the VII. Corps. We had been transferred out of that Corps when we were drawn back out of the line. It was quite possible, therefore, that the Corps to which we were transferred had no knowledge of what the men had been through.

By the 16th we had moved still further back to Couin, and everybody was extremely comfortable. The

weather was still bad, but the men rapidly recovered and were in as good form as ever—in fact, rather better.

On the 18th we had a most cheerful evening. I wanted to do something for all the officers who had done so well during this time, and as we were in a lovely chateau with great big rooms, I told our worthy friend, Morrell, to prepare a banquet to which all the officers of the Brigade and the Units attached were to be bidden ; or rather it was to have been two dinners, each of about sixty. All arrangements had been made for this, and we were to dine on two consecutive nights, but an order had been received to say that we were to move up again on the 19th. Therefore, so as not to waste all the excellent food and wine which Morrell had collected, we coerced the cook into making it one dinner of a hundred and ten, or rather more. It really was rather a masterpiece, and those who were there will not forget it for many a long day.

We had a most excellent dinner under very curious conditions. Everybody had to bring their own knife, fork and spoon, plate and glass, or mug, and these, between each course, had to be washed. But there was no delay at all, and I think everybody did themselves very well indeed. They certainly made enough row afterwards. We had a tremendous rag, and one of the worst offenders—in fact, perhaps the ringleader—was our old friend, O'Shaughnessy, the Roman Catholic padre. I don't suppose that any other Brigade has done such a thing out in France.

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CHAPTER XXV.

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IN IT AGAIN.      WANCOURT TOWER RIDGE.  
POSITION IN FRONT OF CHERISY. LOSS OF OUR  
DIVISIONAL COMMANDER AND COLONEL WEBER.

By the 23rd we had moved close up behind the line, and in the attack that was to take place, for once in a way, we were to be the Brigade in reserve —a most unusual position for us. At first it looked as if we should have very little to do, but this idea was very soon exploded.

The attack took place on the 23rd, and at first everything seemed to go fairly well—hung up in some places but, in the main, getting on all right. The 90th Brigade, who had not been in the later stages of the Heninel fight, were doing the attack, with the 21st Brigade in support of them.

It appears that the 90th Brigade's attack was held up by one or two strong points—particularly one in a quarry, which had not been properly bombarded. The result was a certain loss of direction, and eventually they were back on their own original front line. They had another go in the afternoon, but it was no good.

About mid-day we received orders to move up, and proceeded to the neighbourhood of Neuville-Vitasse. On arrival there, I got orders to send up all battalions as soon as they arrived, and also a message came that I was to go myself to the Headquarters of the 90th Brigade.

By this time it was dark, or very nearly so, and a most unpleasant walk it was. The Boche was throwing stuff about all over the place, and we met several parties of gunners—not of our own Division—who had been in the fighting all day. They certainly had not got a very cheerful tale to tell—particularly one lot, whose guns had to be left in the hands of the enemy. They were, however, subsequently recovered. There was an officer with them, and he kindly informed me that the whole line was retiring—very pleasant news to hear under the circumstances.

Well, we pushed on and, after a little bit, our guide told us that he had lost his way. This was no uncommon thing, and it was only acting up to the record of all guides. However, we had a sort of hazy idea, and eventually we found the place.

On arrival, we found the Divisional Commander there with General Goodman, commanding the 21st Brigade. General Lloyd, who commanded the 90th Brigade, was out at the time.

General Shea explained the situation, which was decidedly difficult. The Boche had made a most determined counter-attack, particularly on the high ground on our right, and for the time being he had broken through. The situation was being re-adjusted by the 21st Brigade, and the arrival of two of our battalions was most opportune. The remaining two battalions were stopped from going up. During that night the Boche was driven out of the place he had broken through and the 90th Brigade were withdrawn from the line. They had had a rather bad time and their losses were pretty severe.

The 21st Brigade took over the line and were supported by our Brigade in so doing. During the day of the 24th the Boche was gradually squeezed out of his position, and retired, leaving the 21st Brigade to advance and secure what had been the final objective of the day before.

On the 25th our Brigade took over part of the line with a view to an attack on Cherisy. All of our fellows now were absolutely experts in digging themselves in, and before long we had got a most excellent line dug, with a certain amount of wire in front and a good support line behind that. Of course, apart from these trenches, all movement had to be out in the open, and this rendered the supply of food, ammunition and stores a difficult matter. However, we were quite happy in our new position, although we were badly overlooked from the direction of Vis-en-Artois.

The Boche had got a very considerable amount of artillery, and made certain places decidedly uncomfortable—particularly the ridge just by Wancourt Tower and the village of Heninel itself.

We had made all our plans for the attack on Cherisy, but on the 26th we were told that we should not have to do this, as the whole Division was being taken out of the line to rest. What had happened behind the line—or, rather, what had happened in the back areas—I do not really know, or, rather, what I do know is not for this account. But there was considerable trouble somewhere, and; with the greatest regret, we lost our G.S.O. (1), who had been with us ever since we had arrived in France. After we had got to know him we had been able to appreciate his real value, and a more hard working and helpful man it would be impossible

to imagine. His being taken away was a source of great regret to us, and we felt that he had been very hardly treated. However, these things do happen.

Our Divisional Commander was very much upset over this, and took certain steps which it would not be right to discuss or disclose. Alas ! the result of this was that, on the 1st May, we also lost our Divisional Commander. A more bitter blow has not been dealt to this Division. He had been with us ever since our active fighting had begun, and we all had the most implicit confidence in him. Further than that, he had endeared himself to all of us, and it was a most unfortunate day for the Division when he was taken away. Whenever we were in difficulties he was always ready to sympathise and, what is much more, render us real help. We had always looked upon him as being an ideal Divisional Commander and could wish for nobody better. He had always been heart and soul with the Division, and his pride in it was unbounded.

Everyone was deeply grieved when he had to go, and he carried with him the best wishes of every officer and man in the Division. He was much too good a man to remain idle, and soon got another Division. We all hoped that it might be our lot to serve under him once again.

The position was this. We had lost our Divisional Commander and our G.S.O. (1). This news would rapidly spread, and it would be, somewhat naturally, imagined that the Division itself had done badly. This was not a position that could be tolerated for one instant, and, as I had been much the longest in the Division, I took it upon myself to ask for an interview with the VII. Corps Commander. (When we had returned to

the line we had gone back into this Corps). Briefly, the result of this interview was that he told me that the Division was in no way to blame and that he had no complaint whatever to make against any unit or Brigade in the Division. These were his exact words as taken down by me in his presence.

It is a little necessary at this time to go through what had happened during the last few eventful weeks, and, without blowing our own trumpet, I think we can fairly claim that the Division, under the circumstances, did extremely well. When the Germans retired from their line in front of us at Agny, we had pushed after him at once and followed very closely at his heels. We were in a most exposed position, and possibly we could have got on further, only we were stopped from doing so by order of the Corps.

In our attack on Heninel we had to advance in the open over a distance of no less than 7,000 yards—at that time a most unheard of performance. The wire in front of the position that we had to attack was supposed to have been cut by the heavy artillery, under the direction of the Corps—it was much too far for our Divisional artillery to take it on. No doubt this wire was extremely well sited, so that it could not be seen, and the result was that it was totally uncut before the attack took place. This had been reported to the Corps before the attack. However, this attack was carried out with the utmost gallantry and dash. It was doomed to be a failure, but when the Brigade on our left, having broken through, bombed down the line in front of us, we at once took it over, and proceeded to do exactly the same thing for the Division on our right, being thereby able to hand over to them

the whole of the enemy trench system in front of their line.

The Division was then called upon to attack a very difficult piece of the line which, owing to the rise of the ground, it had been impossible to see. We were faced with a most stubborn enemy, who was fighting at this time extremely well.

The original attack, carried out under great difficulties, failed, but eventually, within some thirty-six hours, we were able to reach the final objective. This was done before the troops on either our left or our right had gained theirs. It cannot then be said by anyone that the Division had done other than extremely well. Our losses had been very considerable, as will be seen by the fact that at the end of this fighting the total infantry of the Division only amounted to some four thousand men.

Perhaps some of these facts had been lost sight of by the people in the rear, or perhaps, rather, they had no knowledge of them at any time. All this was very disheartening to us. We, ourselves, knew that we had done extremely well, and we knew that we had been well served by our Divisional Commander and by his Staff, and yet we were to lose the services of both our Divisional Commander and his right hand man.

By the 29th of April we had moved back right away from the fighting, and it was very necessary that, after what we had gone through, we must have a rest and, what was more necessary than that, reinforcements.

On the 2nd of May General Williams assumed command of the Division. We had moved back into a charming and restful village in the neighbourhood of

Vaulx, and there we proceeded to once more re-organise, train and get ourselves ready for the next task which was to be allotted to us.

During this time we were inspected by General Watts, the Commander of the Corps into which we had been transferred. He had expressed himself very well pleased with what he had seen, and I must say it was wonderful the way those fellows turned themselves out after all that they had been through. There really was no getting to the bottom of them.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

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**YPRÉS AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. A SUCCESSFUL LITTLE RAID. THE MESSINES RIDGE AND HILL 60 ATTACK. OUR PART IN IT.**

By the 20th we were on the move again and our destination, alas! was one which we had always dreaded —no less a place than Ypres and its neighbourhood. However, we had heard that during all this fighting, and, in fact, for many months past, it had been particularly quiet there, so we hoped there would probably be an opportunity of going on with the training that was so sorely needed. We proceeded to march the whole way, halting occasionally for a day or two. The weather was, on the whole, good and this march was altogether most enjoyable. We went into the line just south of Hooge on the 29th of May.

We were certainly not favourably impressed with our new piece of the line. Considering that the British troops had been in this line for months and months, we were much struck by the trenches, or, rather, in some places, by the lack of them. On our piece of front there were two large gaps, which we proceeded at once to put in good order. But the whole place was in a most disgusting state. Just before we had come in the Boche had given the artillery behind our piece rather a bad pounding. Our task was to prepare for an attack, but the date of this was still quite unsettled. We set to work at once and got through a considerable amount. Altogether this place had a most depressing

effect on one. I suppose that in ordinary times, lying as it does so low, it cannot be exhilarating, but now, with the whole town in a complete state of ruin, and all the surrounding country torn up by shells, one certainly was not attracted to it. It was all so very different to the places that we had left in the south, and certainly nobody seemed very happy in our new surroundings. As usual, we arrived here just as things were stoking up.

The attack on Messines and Hill 60 was just about to take place, although we were kept absolutely in the dark as to the exact date. I must say the secret was very well kept. The artillery fire on both sides was very heavy indeed, but our share of the shooting was considerably the largest. Really the best place to be in was in the front line trenches. These did not come in for very much attention from the Boche. He devoted most of his energies to the back area, and to this he gave a very lively time. Our own Headquarters were certainly not a bed of roses, and we came in for several good doses of gas shelling. But our sympathy was entirely with the gunners, who had a rotten time. Their positions were in practically every case right out in the open, fully exposed to the Boche and with no protection whatever.

About the 4th of June we had a most successful little raid. The powers that be were very anxious to secure an identification of the troops that were opposite to us, and the Bedfords, who were in the line at the time, were on the right. This was the only place where the raid was at all feasible. The whole thing was worked out very carefully, and at about 1-30 in the morning they made a pounce. The wire had been cut by the

gunners the day before, and, within seven minutes of the time of their going over, all of our men were back in our line in safe dug-outs, having secured all that was required, namely, a prisoner. The enemy barrage did not open until one minute after they had all got back safely. Altogether a very neat little enterprise. The prisoner was a most important one. He was a non-commissioned officer who had been through a training course so as to become an officer. He fought like a tiger, and they had the utmost difficulty in getting him across. It took six tough old Bedfords to get him back. The identification was most important, because it showed to the authorities at G.H.Q. that there had been a redistribution throughout the line.

On the 7th of June the attack took place, and the following account was one that I wrote at the time.

*Extract from diary, dated 6th June, 1917 :—*

We have been having a very trying time during the last ten days, in this most foul of all foul places. The way the men have worked has been perfectly splendid. Everything has to be done at night, under the most difficult conditions, and with plenty of shelling—gas and lachrymatory ones, as well as every known brand of others. But there's one thing to be said. If we are having a bad time, the Boche is having it ten times worse.

We had a most successful little show the other night. The powers that be wanted a Boche for identification purposes, and we were told to try to get one; so I gave the job to the Bedfords—they were in the only place where a raid was possible.

We worked it out very carefully, and at 1-30 a.m. we made our pounce. The wire had been cut the day before by our gunners, and within seven minutes they were all back, in safe dug-outs in our lines, with a prisoner, just a minute before the Germans started their barrage—quick work, wasn't it? The prisoner was a N.C.O. who had been through a training course for an officer, so he was quite a good catch. He fought like a tiger, and they had quite a difficult job to bring him in. Several other raids had been tried by other people and they had failed, so it was quite a feather in our caps to get a prisoner at once. As a reward the officer and two men were sent home on ten days' leave at once.

*June 7th.* Now to try and give a sort of account of what has been happening to-day. The whole thing has been an enormous success. Fancy taking Wytschaete, Messines, Hill 60, and doing away, to a great extent, with the Ypres salient, all in one day; it's grand!

I haven't been able to write much lately, but we have been not quite in the storm centre this time, but next door to it and, needless to say, we became involved and came in for a very good little fight.

Ever since we came into this part of the line, the constant banging and noise of our guns and the Boche's has been incessant. It has been about as bad as at the commencement of the battle of the Somme, and I never wished to have to go through that again—but it has turned out that we have had to. For days and nights we have been smashing and pounding their trenches to bits, and giving them most awful hell.

At 3 o'clock this morning we exploded two enormous mines—one at Hill 60 and the other at Messines. I believe they are far bigger than anything that has ever

been attempted before, and have taken months and months to prepare. I watched it from a point of vantage, and it was really a most remarkable sight. It was just getting light, when suddenly there were two immense sheets of flame—very much like a very red sunset. Then there was a distinct kick to the earth, and two seconds afterwards the whole rocked violently.

I believe that a mass of Boches were blown up, as Hill 60 was packed at the time.

This was the signal for the general attack, and in a second you couldn't imagine what a row there was. Every gun was firing for all it was worth. One couldn't see anythiug much, because it was just too dark, but the roar was simply deafening and splendid, and somehow gave one a feeling of intense pride, when one thinks how we started from practically nothing, and now have grown to this enormous extent.

After that we soon began to hear that the objectives had been reached all the way down the line.

We really were not taking part in the attack at all, but nevertheless we came in for a very hot fight.

The people on our right, when they advanced, left nobody to hold their front trenches. This the Boche very soon found out, and delivered a counter-attack with about 300 men. However, our fellows were ready for them, and simply mowed them down with machine and Lewis guns. Of the 300 that started, only a very few reached our trenches, and all these were taken prisoners.

Of course there were all sorts of reports and counter-reports. First that the Boche had broken through in very large numbers, and were holding the trenches on our right. So the only thing to do was to throw

ourselves into the breach, and the Bedfords, who were in that part of the line, were ordered to push them out, and some of the 17th Battalion K.L.R. were sent up in support. In fact, we had a regular little counter-counter-attack.

This worked out all right and the Bedfords pushed them successfully. The place was cleared and the gap filled up. In the afternoon, about 4 p.m., those most determined Boches attacked again, but were easily settled. Altogether it was a "Bedford's" day and, as usual, they did splendidly.

It was rather an exciting and a very anxious day. I would much rather be in the middle of a battle than just on the fringe—but in this case we did, to a small extent, take part in the show.

#### 30TH DIVISION INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY No. 10.

6 a.m. 7th June to 6 a.m. 8th June, 1917.

##### PART I.

*Operations.*—At Zero yesterday the enemy immediately sent up very numerous red lights, and within one minute a barrage opened along our front. On the Right Battalion front it fell in the usual positions. Opposite the Left Battalion a barrage opened between our old front line and new trench through I 18 a. and d., and was maintained for 30 minutes, when it slackened and lifted on to support and communication trenches, doing considerable damage to those trenches.

Five daylight patrols were sent out to ascertain if enemy front line was still held. One of these patrols got within 40 yards of Jackdaw Trench. As they were not fired on, the officer crept forward and began to climb up the enemy parapet. He found the trench full

of Germans "standing to." He fired two rounds rapid at them as their heads came up. The patrol then returned with only one man wounded. The artillery were informed and opened a burst of fire on this trench.

A second patrol was fired on with machine guns and rifles when crossing Menin Road.

Another patrol was fired on with two machine guns and rifles from trenches in front of Hooge, and about two dozen Germans came out of their trenches, apparently to meet them. These were at once fired on with a Lewis gun from our front line, and ran back. Half an hour later four men of this patrol, two of whom were wounded, came in. Two more returned after dark and reported that the officer and two men had been killed. A patrol went out and recovered their bodies about 40 yards from the German wire.

A small officer's patrol reconnoitred the trenches opposite Cross Street at 8-45 a.m., with a view to pushing forward through gap in wire if opportunity offered. The trench was found to be full of Germans, and patrol was heavily fired on. It was, therefore, not practicable to get into the enemy trenches. Another patrol was sent out afterwards and confirmed this.

At about 10 a.m. about 300 of the enemy, with their packs on, under an officer counter-attacked S. of St. Peter Street opposite Hedge Street. The portion of the front attacked was only thinly held, but the troops on either flank inflicted very heavy casualties with Vickers and Lewis guns on the enemy, and only a few reached our trenches, from which they were soon ejected. As the enemy was reported to be in considerable numbers in the trenches I 30 b. and J 19 a. the artillery bombarded this area at intervals from 10-40 a.m. to 12-45 p.m.

At about 4 p.m. the enemy commenced another counter-attack near the same place. Our men ran out to meet them, and they broke up at once and ran back, hotly pursued by our troops.

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On the 10th we were back out of the line, and right glad we were to be out of it once more. This had been a most trying time in every way, but we were all delighted because we knew that during this time we had done extremely well.

The following two telegrams were received by Divisional Headquarters from the Army Commander :—

5th June.—“The Army Commander wishes to convey his congratulations to the 30th Division on the success of their raid, which was most helpful. The energy of this Division, recently arrived, and desire to help is much appreciated.”

8th June.—“Congratulate all concerned on the able and prompt way in which the enemy's attempt to interfere with the flank of the main attack was dealt with, reflecting much credit to all concerned. The Army Commander also wishes to thank the II. Corps for all the assistance given towards the success of the main operation.”

As we were the only Brigade of the 30th Division in the line, we may take the full credit to ourselves for getting both these telegrams.

Shortly after this the authorities offered me three months leave, and were prepared to guarantee that I should come back to the Brigade again at the end of that time. This was a most unusual exception for them to make, and I took it as a great compliment that they should give one back one's own Brigade once more.

I was feeling at the time very tired and rather knocked up, and did not feel that I could put the same amount of energy into my work. So I decided to accept this leave, but it was to be clearly on the understanding that I was to come back to the old Brigade once more.

Therefore the account of the doings of the Brigade for the period of July, August and September have to be gained from information other than my own first-hand.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

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A PATROL EPISODE WHICH HAD UNFORTUNATE RESULTS. LOSS OF GALLANT OFFICERS. THE ATTACK ON JULY 3IST. THE SAILORS' VISIT. RAID ON THE "TWINS." DEPARTURE OF TORREY AND LASCELLES.

The following account of what happened during the three months that I was away has been obtained from an account given me by Captain Torrey and also from the War Diary.

On the 16th of June I left for England, and Brigadier-General W. Norman temporarily took over command of the Brigade. The Brigade was at rest at this time, but on the 20th June they moved up into the Dicke-busch area. They were employed on digging assembly trenches for the attack which was to take place, and had rather a hard time in this respect, suffering considerable casualties.

On the 23rd June the Brigade went up into the line again and were subjected to considerable artillery fire both on the front and back areas. The Brigade Headquarters were at Bedford House, and they seem to have come in for their full share of the enemy shelling.

The Brigade was holding the Torr-Tops, and the right battalion lived in an extensive system of mined galleries, which became inconveniently crowded with troops and stores. This place was to be the subject, some months after, of a terrible tragedy. For some unknown reason the whole place caught fire, and in

a few minutes was completely burnt out. Several officers of the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment were burnt to death, and the Rev. C. Moore, C.F., who used to be with the 20th Battalion K.L.R., unfortunately met his death there. Poor fellow ! from all accounts he could have got out perfectly well, but he went back to see if he could do anything to help the others, and was heard of no more.

About the 3rd of July a fighting patrol of the 17th Battalion K.L.R. went out to obtain an identification of the Germans, but were heavily engaged with two hostile patrols. After a good fight our patrol withdrew, the officer in charge, Lieut. Chavasse, bringing up the rear. When the patrol reached our line it was found that Lieut. Chavasse was missing. A search party under 2nd Lieut. Peters went out, and found him lying close to the Boche wire with a wound in his thigh. They returned for a stretcher, and on the way back 2nd Lieut. Peters was unfortunately killed. Captain C. E. Torrey also made an attempt to get him in, but he was wounded whilst doing so. It was then becoming light, and it was deemed inadvisable to attempt a further rescue until darkness came on again. The following night a search party, which included his brother, Captain Chavasse, R.A.M.C., went out, but could find no trace of him. This officer is still missing, and it is feared that he must have died soon after being taken in by the Germans. He was a most gallant fellow, like all the rest of his family.

The Brigade was relieved out of the line on the 7th of July, and proceeded to join the remainder of the Division in the Recques area, and commenced there a systematic training for the new attack which was

to take place. This continued until the 19th of July, when the Brigade moved up into the Steenwoorde West area.

During this period of training a Divisional Horse Show was held, in which the Brigade carried off several prizes.

Training still continued until the 28th July, when the Brigade moved once more into the Dicke-busch area.

On the night of the 30th-31st July the Brigade moved up into its assembly position in support, behind the 21st and the 90th Brigades. These two were, according to plan of attack, to be responsible for capturing the first and second objectives, whilst our Brigade was eventually to go through them and establish a line of strong points on the third objective, pushing through the region of Inverness Copse and Dumbarton Lakes to a line running from the south-west corner of Polygon Wood, south of the Menin Road, in front of Gheluvelt.

The battle commenced on the 31st of July in weather which was very adverse to operations—rain falling continually and with very poor visibility. The opening stages were somewhat confused. There was no daylight at zero hour, but the Brigade moved forward according to the programme laid down for it. They bumped up against the enemy somewhere along the first objective, when the 19th Battalion K.L.R. were put in on the left to fill a gap across the Menin Road. The 17th Battalion K.L.R. held the position east of Stirling Castle, with the 20th Battalion K.L.R. on their right, overlooking the Dumbarton Lakes, and joined up with the 21st Brigade.

## AT PRESCOT.



BARRACK ROOM.

[Photo Carbonara

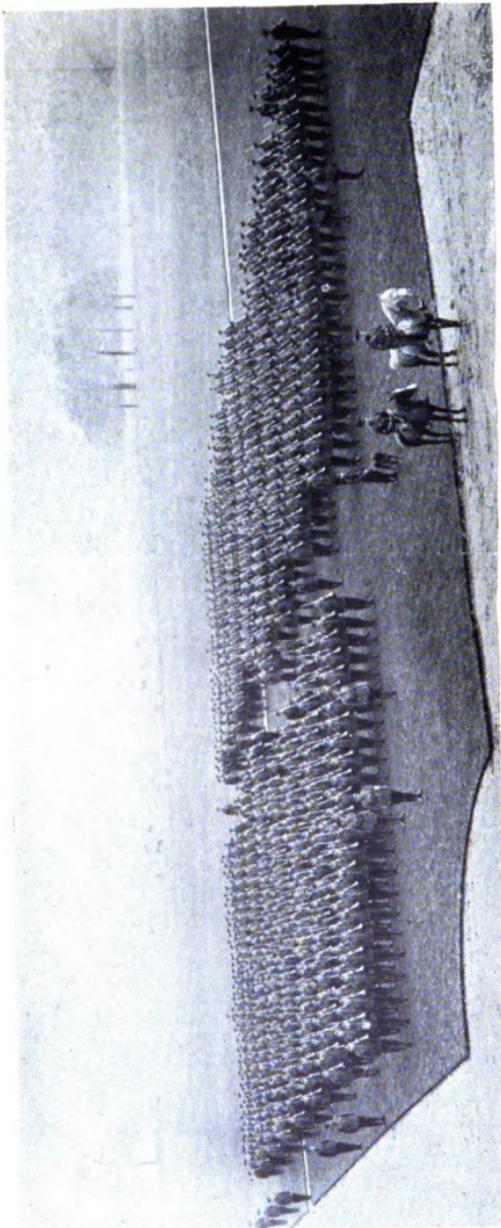


DINING HALL.

[Photo Carbonara

1st (City) Batt. K.L.R.

PRESNTATION OF BADGES BY LORD DERBY.



All through this action Major—now Lieut.-Colonel—C. N. Watson commanded the 20th Battalion, owing to the absence on leave of Lieut.-Colonel J. Douglas. His handling of the battalion was the subject of much congratulation, and from all accounts he fought it magnificently. He was, immediately after the action, put in for an immediate reward, and to the satisfaction of all, he obtained his D.S.O. For four drenching days the Brigade hung on to its line of water-logged shell holes, and offensive action was impossible for both sides.

Captain Chavasse, R.A.M.C., again won distinction for his zeal and cheerfulness under the most dis-spiriting condition.

On the night of the 3rd–4th August the Brigade was relieved out of the line, and on the 5th moved by train to Cæstre. After several moves they eventually settled down for a rest in a camp near Bailleul.

As usual, during this rest period they went in for a certain amount of sports, and a very successful Brigade meeting was held on the 20th of August. I believe the success of this meeting was to a large extent due to the preparations made for it by Torrey and the excellent way in which he ran it. One of the best things that there was was the Transport Competition. In condition and efficiency there was very little to choose between the battalions, and points were won or lost on the most minute details. Again all the battalions had a go at the Bedfords, and tried to beat them in the tug-o'-war, but they held the field against all comers.

On the 23rd of August the Brigade moved to the Dranoutre area and continued training there.

On the 31st of August we had a visit from a party of the Royal Navy, who had come on a joy ride to see

the condition of affairs on the Western front. They were warmly welcomed, and during the short time they had there everybody tried to make their tour as instructive as possible. I believe they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and when the time came for them to go they were extremely reluctant to be off and highly pleased with the time they had had. Our fellows were equally sorry to part with them.

On the 2nd of September the Brigade moved up into the line again in the Tower Hamlets district, and there the hostile artillery appears to have been fairly active—to a certain extent with gas shells. Otherwise there was nothing of importance to relate about this period. All this time fighting was going on further up north, which all tended to make the flanks to a certain extent lively.

On the 20th of September, in conjunction with the attack carried out by troops north of the Ypres-Comines Canal, the Bedfords advanced their left flank slightly, and at the same time raids were attempted by the 19th Battalion K.L.R. and the Bedfords against the "Twins," which were a couple of block-houses much frequented by the Boche, and which were a serious annoyance to us. They made a most determined effort to reach this, but owing to heavy rifle and machine gun fire from all directions, were forced to withdraw.

On the night of the 21st of September the Brigade was relieved and came back to the Kemmel area. We got to know this district pretty well, and from what we know, the Boche must be in possession of a most useful piece of ground, having secured, as he has now,

the observation from Kemmel Hill. From this place he can see miles in practically every direction.

Captain Torrey had left for home on the 20th of August. He had absolutely worked himself to a standstill for the benefit of the Brigade, and all parted with him with the greatest regret. The whole time that he had been with us he had been absolutely invaluable, and, as I have said before, we had every reason to be proud of one who was considered about the best Staff Captain in France.

Several changes had taken place during my absence. Colonel Rendle had succeeded Colonel Peck in command of the 17th Battalion K.L.R., and Colonel Bunbury had taken over command of the Bedfords. Immediately after my return our Brigade-Major, Lascelles, went on a Staff course to England, and from that he did not come back to us, as he was promoted to G.S.O. (2) of the 55th Division. We were all extremely sorry to lose him, and I think he was equally sorry to leave us. He had had a very hard and difficult time. He had come out of it very well, and I am glad to say that his efforts were rewarded by his getting the D.S.O. shortly afterwards.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

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RETURN TO THE BRIGADE. IMPORTANT CHANGE  
IN THE 18TH BATTALION K.L.R. OUR LINE IN  
FRONT OF HOLLEBEKE. VISIT HOME OF "THE  
OPTIMISTS." OUR LIFE IN THESE PARTS.

I arrived back with the Brigade on the 25th of September, and right glad I was to be with them once more. I am delighted to say that they appreciated one's coming back again. We were all quartered in and about Kemmel—not at all a bad spot in the dry weather that we were having at the time. The Brigade at this time was out of the line, but was soon to go in once more.

At this time a rather important change took place in the 18th Battalion. They received orders that a lot of Lancashire Hussars were to be sent to them, having been taken off their horses, and that they, in their turn, were to distribute an equal number amongst our three battalions. They were, in future, to be known as the 18th Lancashire Hussars Battalion K.L.R., not at all a popular move, either with the Lancashire Hussars or with the 18th Battalion, but unfortunately there was no way out of it.

On the 1st of October we went into the line in front of Hollebeke—a fairly quiet spot from which we could get a most extraordinary view and could see for miles, and none of the Boche guns could fire without our being able to spot them. The whole system of holding the trenches was rather different to anything we had had

before. Up till now our old way of holding the trenches had been a continuous front and support lines with communication trenches, but here, owing to the nature of the ground, which was in a terrible state, it was impossible to have regular trenches, and the line was held more or less in small posts of about one N.C.O. and six men in front, and posts of rather bigger dimensions behind them. There were practically no communication trenches, and all movement had to be out in the open.

Our Headquarters were of the most uncomfortable description. Why, Heaven only knows, but it had been put down on the edge of a marsh, and consisted of simply a few tents and one or two elephant shelters. In the dry weather I dare say it would have been all right, but at this time of the year the bad weather was setting in, and the result was the whole place was so damp that we could not remain there. In the meantime a regular Brigade Headquarters was being constructed for us—a very good one made of concrete—but this was taking a long time to do.

The system under which the Division was holding the line at this time was that the 21st and 90th Brigades were relieving each other on a wider front than ours, whereas we were remaining in the line the whole time, with one battalion in front, one in support, and two battalions out. A most suitable arrangement as far as we were concerned, and it made it very easy work for the battalions.

All through this time the fighting was going on further north in the direction of Passchendaele, but this was not affecting us to any extent. The Boche was doing a certain amount of bombing with his aero-

planes all round Kemmel and that district. A most uncomfortable feeling it was, too, to have these things buzzing over your head in the dark, never knowing where he was going to drop his beastly bombs, with no protection whatever except a tent or a piece of corrugated iron.

During my absence at home—in fact, immediately I had gone on my three months leave—the Divisional Commander had sent home Colonel Peck, who had commanded the 17th Battalion with such success, and had replaced him by Colonel Rendall. Also during my absence it had been decided that Colonel Rendall, in his turn, should lose command of the 17th Battalion. He had done very good work indeed with the training of his men, and when I returned from leave I was delighted to find what a good state they were in. When he left, Colonel Watson, who had commanded the 20th Battalion during the action on the 31st of July, and at which he had gained his D.S.O., was given command of the 17th Battalion. I might at the same time mention that at the same time as the Division Commander had taken this step with Colonel Peck, he took a similar one as regards Major Poyntz, who was temporarily commanding the Bedfords in the absence of his brother, Colonel Poyntz. In his place he had put Colonel Bunkerby. This officer shared the same fate as Colonel Rendall.

Life at this time was somewhat uneventful. Many days and nights were quite quiet; others, on the other hand, were quite lively, and times in the Ravine and at Denis Wood will be particularly remembered by some whose fortune it was to be there. On this piece the Boche was very conservative, and he practically always shelled

the same place, which we had got to know and which we carefully avoided. The Dam Strasse and the White Chateau certainly came under this heading ; ever since the battle of Messines he had strafed these places.

About the end of October we sustained a great loss in Major Draper, of the 17th Battalion. A chance shell exploded at his feet, and the poor fellow died shortly afterwards. His was a very fine influence in the 17th Battalion, and he was a great favourite amongst us all. He had been with us practically the whole time.

At the end of October Colonel Rollo and I evolved a splendid scheme. The funds of our Comforts Committee were getting a little low in Liverpool, so we decided to send home "The Optimists," our Pierrot troupe, to give a few performances in Liverpool. We had an idea that this would be much appreciated by the people at home, and give them a certain amount of pleasure. At the same time it would be helping to fill the coffers of our Comforts Fund. The scheme was at once taken in hand, and the Comforts Committee were asked if it appealed to them. A few days brought back the answer showing how pleased they would be to have them home and how they would undertake the whole running of the shows.

In about the middle of December "The Optimists" went home and, under the excellent arrangements that had been made by the ladies of the Committee, they gave three shows, which were an enormous success, and brought in the sum of no less than £750. Apart from the cash, I think their visit did a great deal of good amongst the friends that we had in Liverpool.

I should like to add a word of congratulation to the ladies of the Committee for the splendid way in which they carried out their part of the performance.

I might say that at this time "The Optimists" were having a great success, playing up and down the country in France. Everywhere they were in great request, and rightly so.

At the end of October the Boche had the impertinence to try and raid one of our positions. They were driven off and bumped up against another post, who also gave them a very hot time—altogether a most unsuccessful little enterprise for them. They left a prisoner in our hands, which was what we wanted, being very useful for identification purposes.

Why on earth we have ever sat down under the insults which the French have continued to pour out on us as regards our weather I cannot imagine. We really are a most foolish race. If we had only taken the trouble to come over to this country we should have found that their climate is ten times worse than ours was, and that they have just as much as us in the way of rain—further than that, when it does rain in their country the whole state of the ground becomes nothing less than a sea of mud. Ours is bad in some parts of England, but nothing like this. We were having at the time bad weather, and, I dare say owing to the drainage having been upset, the whole place was completely water-logged. To move about you had to stick to the duck-boarded track, or else you practically got drowned or stuck in the mud. This was tiresome, because the Boche had a way of paying attention to these tracks, which, of course, were clearly visible in

his aeroplane photographs. At times he could make it most decidedly unpleasant.

On the 30th of October we had a distribution of medal ribbons by the Corps Commander, General Sir A. Hunter Weston, and for this we had a ceremonial parade, practically on the same lines as we had at Halloy. The whole thing was most satisfactory, and the Corps Commander was extremely complimentary on the excellent appearance of the men and the way in which they handled their arms. Really these lads are extraordinary. They had had practically no practice at this sort of thing for months, and yet they put up a magnificent show like this. What they would be like if they had the chance of a little bit of training it is impossible to imagine. They certainly would be very hard to beat anywhere.

The beginning of November our worthy friend, Lynton Smith, who had been doing Senior Chaplain to the Division since he left us in the early days at Maricourt, left for home, where he had been given a fine living. We were all extremely sorry to part with him. He had been a real good friend to us, although, unfortunately, we had not seen nearly so much of him at the end as we should have liked. We all remember, though, with gratitude the work that he did for us in Maricourt during those trying times.

Our first dealings with Americans took place here, where some young American officers were sent up to learn what conditions of life were like. We were all very much impressed with them. They were fine young keen fellows, very quiet and humble, but full of dash. If all the American officers come up to this standard they should do extremely well.

On the 15th of November we handed over the piece of our line and were moved back to Locre, and thence, on the 16th, to Steenwoorde.

We had, by this time, got our new Brigade-Major, Captain Groube, and one was very pleased at last to get settled down again with a permanent Brigade-Major after having had several changes in a short time. He was a long thin lad, much after the style of Seymour.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

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**A NEW HOME. POLDERHŒK CHATEAU AND  
THE MENIN ROAD. HOPELESS SCENES OF  
DESOLATION. COLONEL POYNTZ'S RETURN.  
AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE OF THE BOCHE.  
CHRISTMAS. A WELCOME RELIEF.**

From La Clytte we went back, about the 17th, to Steenwoorde. There we were by way of having that illusive month of training. How often had we been promised it, and how seldom it had been our lot to receive it ; in fact, I don't think we ever had had our full time. The only thing to do was to get to work at once with our training, and pray for as long a time as possible.

This was to be no exception to what had become the rule, and after a few days in our new home, we were to be pushed up into the line again—into a place which was certainly a very bad exchange for the last piece of the line which we had left. The original intention had been, I believe, that we were to go in at Passchendæle, but this was subsequently changed, and we were to take over the piece in front of Polderhoek Chateau and astride the Menin Road. Not at all a cheerful prospect ! The whole place was a sea of mud and shell holes. Practically no trenches, and no comfort of any description for anyone.

On the 27th of November we moved up into the line again, having had about ten days out. Really during this time we had been able to put in quite a

considerable amount of training, as we did not have to find nearly the number of working parties that we usually had to on these occasions, although, most unfortunately for us, the 19th Battalion were not with us at all, having been taken away, lock, stock and barrel, for working parties east of Ypres. It was very hard luck for them, having missed this rest, but it was up to us to make it up to them in another way as soon as possible.

Before we were to go into the line a certain thing was to be done by the troops to the north of our piece. The enemy were still in possession of Polderhoek Chateau—a thing which was unknown to us at that time, because we were strangers to the place, and were under the impression that it was in our hands. This place was a source of annoyance to them because from it they could look into their back area, and they were therefore very anxious that it should be taken. As it concerned them—and them only—they asked for permission to undertake this enterprise. This they did. Unfortunately it was not entirely successful. In fact, they had rather heavy losses and did not succeed in taking the chateau, but only managed to push forward some 150 yards. Their work following this advance was wonderful, and within twelve hours they had dug themselves a good trench across the piece. This they handed over to us. In giving them the credit for this excellent work, there is no harm in saying that they were New Zealand troops.

Our line to be occupied was divided into two parts—one piece in front of Polderhoek Chateau, and the other one across the Menin Road. Both were completely separate, and each was held by one battalion. We

first of all also held a piece by Tower Hamlets, but this was subsequently transferred to the 21st Brigade; the arrangement being that the 90th Brigade and ours were to go into our piece of the line alternately, whilst the 21st Brigade went in continually—much as we had done in front of Hollebeke. The trenches were of a decidedly sketchy nature, and apart from the front lines, or portion of lines, there was very little depth in the defence as taken over. This was remedied by the creation of a line on strong points.

Those who were there will not have a very pleasant recollection of our stay in these parts. It was a beast of a place, and all the conditions were equally bad. This particularly refers to the Polderhoek Chateau position, and I am quite sure that the Bedfords and the 19th Battalion had no regrets whatever when we left there.

During our turn in the trenches the Boche was decidedly active. By that time he had had his morale distinctly raised, first his attack on the Italians, secondly the Cambrai business, and lastly the Russian desertion from the Allied cause. His attitude had distinctly changed. Before these successes which he had had he was decidedly inclined to be tame, but, after them, they adopted a most aggressive policy. He was evidently annoyed at our being so close to him at Polderhoek Chateau, and one night during our time there he made a determined effort to get into our trenches. This was entirely unsuccessful, and the Bedfords were able to give him a good lesson. He also made an attempt to get into our lines in the Menin Road, but in this, too, he failed, and the 20th Battalion K.L.R. made him pay pretty heavily for the attempt.

During the first few hours of our coming into the line we suffered a most unfortunate loss—in fact it was on the way up to the trenches that Colonel Rollo got hit for the second time, and a bit of shell in the foot laid him by for several months. We could ill afford to lose him, with his cheerfulness and driving power. He was a tower of strength in all senses of the word.

The scene of desolation in this district baffled all description. The whole place was simply one sea of shell holes. There was not a single tree standing; just simply a few ragged poles, and what must once have been a lovely country was now the most desolate and dreary waste imaginable. Added to this, the debris of war did not have an encouraging effect. On all sides you saw marks of some tragedy, such as a broken gun, a set of torn equipment, steel hats—in fact, everything that denoted that some casualty had taken place at that spot. Unfortunately, too, it had not been possible in many places to bury the dead, both German and our own, and in other cases those who had been buried had been dug up again by the continual shell fire. Altogether the ground to the east of Ypres was a very sad spectacle indeed.

We came out of the line again about the middle of December, having handed it over to the 90th Brigade, and returned to our not very pleasant camp near Reninghelst. Not a particularly cheerful spot, but then no place round about Ypres was at this time.

Just about this time we were going through great trouble as regards the command of the Bedfords, and a hopeless situation seemed to have arisen. Colonel Poyntz had improved very much in health, and had come out again to this country; but instead of the

authorities sending him back to command his own battalion, they had posted him to the command of the 4th Battalion, thereby ousting an officer who had been commanding it for some time. They had brought Colonel Thorpe from the command of another battalion to command the 2nd Bedfords. He was essentially a 1st Battalion Bedfords man, and this battalion was commanded by an officer not belonging to the Bedfords at all.

In the meantime Colonel Bunbury's leave had expired, and he was back again. Major Wynne was there commanding the battalion, so at this particular time in my room there met four officers who had a claim to the command of the battalion. To cut a long story short, order was eventually evolved out of this chaos, and Colonel Thorpe went to command the 1st Battalion (Bedfordshire Regiment), and Colonel Poyntz came to command the 2nd Battalion once more. It would be impossible to describe the joy with which his battalion greeted him on his return.

Life had become once more quite different for them with him at their head, and I don't mind saying in these pages that I have never, before or since (with the exception of the 18th Battalion K.L.R. and Colonel Trotter) seen such an instance of devotion of a battalion to its commanding officer. He was literally all the world to them. We were very sorry indeed to lose Colonel Thorpe, who had only been with us a very short time, but who had left us with a fine impression of his soldiering powers and of his personality. He shortly afterwards got a Brigade.

The Germans were decidedly anxious to push back the British line in front of Polderhoek Chateau, and

in the middle of December they made another determined attack. At first they got into a portion of the line, and although they were driven out from this, they made a subsequent attack, and succeeded in getting into practically the whole piece, leaving in the hands of the garrison who were there, however, the two places which were material to us. We were out of the line at the time, but the 17th Battalion were called upon to assist. It was rather unfortunate, but if the Boche chose to make a sufficiently determined attempt no power on earth could stop him, because, on that particular piece, he was able to bring up a strong force out of sight, whereas we could only put a very limited number into these trenches.

Our position, however, was of no great advantage, because it did not give us any observation, and had only put us under his nose at the chateau. If the chateau itself had been in our possession, that would have been a very different matter; so the loss was not a great one. Altogether the whole of our sector was such that the Boche could make himself very offensive to us. Practically the whole thing was overlooked from Gheluvelt Church, or rather what remained of it—a heap of brick and stone. He did not fail to make use of this observation, and made himself distinctly unpleasant to the duckboard tracks which we had to follow, sweeping them with machine guns and also sniping with whizz-bangs.

We went into the line again on the 21st December, and were due to come out again on Christmas morning. The Boche during this period in the trenches was active in the way of shelling, but nothing more than that.

For months before we had made all arrangements for Christmas dinners for the men. We had taken time by the forelock, and a committee of all the Quarter-masters, under the able leadership of Cressingham, had been scouring the country for pigs, turkeys, etc. These we had bought and left on the farms to get ripe. The canteen was by way of supplying £50 to each battalion, but before we had done, this sum was far exceeded, and it really worked out that the canteen had to find about £100 for each—not a bad performance, and one was glad that one had a substantial fund to fall back upon.

As we were only coming out of the line on Christmas Day, all the battalions elected to have their Christmas on the following day, and there was no doubt that, under the circumstances, they had the best time imaginable. My own Christmas Day, perhaps, was not quite so nice. I was greeted first thing in the morning by a letter from the Division telling me that I was to be prepared, and that I was to get out the plans for the re-capture of the piece of line that had been lost in front of Polderhoek—a most difficult operation and one which had cost the New Zealanders about half of two battalions. I cannot say that I looked forward to the enterprise. When I arrived back at my rear Headquarters I found a car waiting to take me to Divisional Headquarters to discuss the matter. No time had been fixed for making this attack, so I decided not to mention it to anybody until after they had celebrated their Christmas, and thereby allow everybody to have a good time. I am very thankful that I did this, because, some two days afterwards, we got word that the whole thing was off, and that we should not have to do it. I don't think I have ever been so

pleased at hearing that any attack on the Boche should be cancelled as I was on that occasion, because I felt that our loss would have been a very heavy one, and it was very doubtful whether it could have been successfully carried out.

We got news about this time that we were to leave this district altogether. I can, without fear of contradiction, say that every soul was only too delighted to be leaving a place that we all loathed, particularly as we heard that our next place was to be of a very different character.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

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MOVE DOWN SOUTH. A MOST INTERESTING AND PLEASANT SPOT. RETURN OF COLONEL PECK. THE 20TH BATTALION SPLIT UP. RETURN OF THE 18TH BATTALION AND DEPARTURE OF THE 2ND BEDFORDS.

By the middle of January we had moved right away down on the right of the British line, and were to take over a new piece from the French. We were all delighted at this prospect, and welcomed the idea of getting back again down into that country, which was much pleasanter altogether.

We were in a decidedly interesting part of the country, and on the 19th we were established round about Beaulieu-les-Fontaines. Amongst other things, we were the first British troops that had ever been in this area, and the result was that we were welcomed on all sides. Another thing of interest was that we were in the middle of the country which had been vacated by the Boche in his retirement, and one heard from the French people who had been there during his occupation, countless stories of how he had behaved, and what his methods of livelihood had been like during his stay there. It was quite incredible to see the useless damage which he had done—purely out of spite and for no military reason whatever. He had in Roye knocked down the steeple of a beautiful little twelfth century church, and then, just before he had evacuated it, he laid a mine, which exploded after they had all

gone out, thereby ruining the whole thing except just the outer shell. This was not a single instance, but only one of hundreds of others of the same description. All the fruit trees had been cut down, and the French soldiers, from whom we were to take over shortly, were, I think, more annoyed with this than with anything else that he had done. The Boche did not seem to have ill-treated the people who were left there, though it is a fact that they took away all the women from the age of 15 to 45, and transferred them from their homes into the back areas, so as to carry on work for them. These poor people were absolutely cut off from their homes and from their relations, and had not been heard of again since.

The inhabitants were very interesting when they came to talk about the Germans. On all sides one heard the stories of how badly they were fed—in fact, in this particular area they assured one that the Germans practically lived on the land; that they had nothing but vegetables, which they had grown themselves, and very rarely indeed did they have any meat. Of course, during the time of their occupation this was one of the back areas, and I believe that the troops who are out of the line are very often treated in this fashion.

The soldiers themselves hated their superior officers, but when they were together they would never say anything at all about them, being afraid that they would be given away by their friends, but the inhabitants told me that, when they got a man by himself, they were quite prepared to speak openly of their hatred, not only of their officers, but of the Kaiser and all his surroundings, and were quite free in expressing their longing for peace. It must be remembered, however,

that all this dated from the time when they were having such a very bad hammering on the Somme, and naturally their morale was at a very low ebb.

When Colonel Rollo, who was in command of the 19th Battalion, had been wounded, I made a special point of asking that Colonel Peck, who had so successfully commanded the 17th Battalion for such a long time, and who was still in England, should be sent out to command the 19th Battalion. This, to everybody's delight, came off, and Colonel Peck very shortly rejoined us. If we were delighted, I am sure he was.

We went into our new piece of the line on the 29th of January, and the difference between that and our piece that we had just left by Ypres was simply laughable. Here there was absolutely not a shell hole. It is true that all the villages had been destroyed, but this was done when the Boche evacuated this territory, and was brought about by mines and fires. Our front was enormous—in fact, the Divisional front was something between eleven and thirteen thousand yards; but we could afford to hold this line lightly when one sees that we were separated from the Boche by a "No Man's Land" in most places of a width of not less than a mile, and the whole of this was taken up by a river and canal and the rest of it floods. In fact, except at one or two points, it was quite impossible for the Boche to get at us, added to which the French had put up masses and masses of wire. I have always found that whenever we are far away from the Boche the wire is always excellent, for obvious reasons.

We had one of those places which the French call a *Point de friction* in front of us, in the shape of La Fere, which was an old Vauban fortress, but even here

we were separated from him by the river and canal, over both of which the bridges had been destroyed. The French whom we relieved positively hated the idea of going out of the line. They had been there for six months, and had made themselves extremely comfortable. During the whole of their six months the French Division had only had 27 casualties, of which nine had been caused during a raid. No wonder that they were happy in their nice quiet spot !

The taking over from them was very interesting and was most successfully carried out. I don't remember a piece of line having been so well handed over to us before. The country was absolutely charming, and everybody was in high spirits getting back, as we were, out of the mud of Flanders.

Just behind our line, some few miles back, lay the town of Chauny. This was, before the war, quite an important place, but when the Boche cleared out he had moved all the inhabitants remaining in to one quarter of it, and for twenty-three days he had systematically blown up and burnt the remainder. It was a most awful scene of wilful destruction imaginable. There was not one stone left standing on another. He had intended to remove the inhabitants from the corner in which they were, and to have destroyed that, but the advance had been too rapid, and that small portion of the town was left practically intact.

Our methods and those of the French were very different. He manages to exist on a minimum of transport, whereas we, on the other hand, rely on a maximum. The result was that, during the French occupation, the roads and villages were practically empty during the day time, but with us the villages, or

what remained of them, were crowded with troops, and the roads were one continual stream of lorries, waggons, etc. The Boche very soon tumbled to it that we had taken over this piece of the line, having observed this from his observation balloons and by means of his aeroplanes. The result was that Chauny particularly came in for a good dose of bombing at nights—a thing absolutely unknown to the French. Our rest in this piece of the line was complete. For two whole days no shells whatever fell on our piece—an unheard of thing for us—and the next day we had to put up with the receipt of five shells. This place was indeed a treat after what we had been through.

It had been decided that all Brigades were to be reduced from four battalions to three, so at the beginning of February the decree went forth that the 20th Battalion was to be split up, and all the officers and men were to be drafted to the 17th, 18th and 19th Battalions. This was most distressing, particularly with a battalion that had such a fine record and fine spirit as the 20th had throughout. They were formed after the rest of the City Battalions, but rapidly caught up, and had always been a most magnificent battalion. We were all extremely sorry that this should have to come to pass. This battalion was selected on account of the fact that theirs was the highest number, *i.e.*, 20th.

Alas ! this was not the only loss we were to suffer, because it was further decreed that the Bedfords, who had been with us since the end of 1915, were now to go to the 90th Brigade, and to be replaced by the 18th Battalion K.L.R. returning once more to us. Whilst we most cordially welcomed the idea of the 18th coming back once more to their old home, and knowing that we

were getting in them a remarkably fine battalion, we had, throughout the whole Brigade, a most sincere and genuine affection for the old Bedfords. They came to us, much against their will, from the 7th Division, but immediately settled down and tried to help us—a new Division in France. Right well did they do this, and their presence was of enormous value to us throughout. Our relations were of the most friendly during the whole time that they were with us. It has even gone further than that, and we, everyone of us, had the greatest affection for them. I am glad to say that they entirely shared our feelings on the subject, and were genuinely miserable at having to leave our old Brigade.

Well, we can look back to having had many very happy days with them, and they left with the proud feeling that whatever they have been asked to do they have carried out much more than well. It was a very sad day when this re-organisation of Brigades took place.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ST. QUENTIN PIECE. PREPARATIONS  
FOR THE ENEMY'S ATTACK. NO SURPRISE  
WHATEVER.

We were not to remain very long in our ultra quiet spot ; such things were too good for us, and we did not expect ever to be left long in a place like this. We were taken out after ten days, just while the re-organisation went on, and by about the 23rd of February we were moved up a little further north into another part of the line, just opposite St. Quentin—not at all a bad spot, and up till now very quiet indeed. Nothing whatever to complain about. The worst disadvantage of this place was that the whole of our line, and most of the back areas for miles back, were overlooked from the Cathedral, the walls and steeple of which were still standing. The interior had been burnt some months before by the Germans. From our earliest days in this place it was quite apparent to all of us that the Boche was going to carry out his offensive here, and we at once set to work to strengthen and improve our line.

A very considerable amount of work had already been done, particularly in the way of wiring ; but there yet remained a great deal to be done, and with the troops at our disposal, on this very wide piece, it was difficult to carry out all that was required. The only thing to do was to slog in as hard as ever we possibly could, and trust that the Germans would give us a little time before he started his offensive. The work

that was done during this time was phenomenal, and that was due, to a great extent, to the excellent organisation of the working parties.

As early as the beginning of March we were expecting him to make his attack. The 2nd of March had been named as a likely day. On the whole the weather was not bad, and did not hinder us unduly. We had bad spells, but this country dried up very quickly.

It was a very anxious time indeed for the battalion holding the line. Our system was that one battalion was holding the whole Brigade front. It could not be considered anything else than a lightly held outpost line. They had a few posts out in front, about six in all, and each of these posts consisted of about six men. Behind this we had a series of other posts, and again, behind these, a couple of strong points. This absorbed two companies of the battalion. Then there was one company which was detailed for counter-attacking purposes, and the fourth, and last, company of the battalion was responsible for the garrison and up-keep of a redoubt called the Epine de Dallon. Here also was situated the Battalion Headquarters.

For any further defence one had to go back to what was called the battle zone—a distance of some two or three miles back. This was a series of posts and strong points, which had been dug within the last month, and in our case was to be manned by the remaining two battalions at our disposal.

I might say that the Division had two Brigades, holding each of them a sector, whilst the third Brigade was in Corps reserve. From this it will be seen, therefore, that if the enemy attacked in sufficient strength,

there was no possibility of helping the battalion which was holding the line. In the first place, the distance to them was a great one, and, in the second place, there were not the troops available to send to their assistance without depleting the already very thinly held defences of the battle zone. Therefore the battalion in the forward zone knew that, if it was to be their fate to be in that zone when the Boche attacked, there was very little hope of support indeed for any of them. The officers and men were splendid, and their spirits were of the best. They were determined to give the enemy a real warm reception should he attack during their time, but, at the same time, it was anxious work, and we all knew it.

On the 8th of March we had a visit from the Commander-in-Chief, who came to have a look at our piece. Of course naturally he could not come up very far forward, but we were able, from Roupy, to give him a general idea of what the country looked like.

As time went on it became more and more apparent to us that the enemy were going to attack on our piece. Day after day, we could see in their line officers with maps busy with their glasses looking at our piece. We were a little bit relieved, however, by the fact that he did not appear to be registering any new guns, but this does not appear, with him, to be of the same necessity as it is with us. He relies very much on the use of trench mortars, as was seen in a little incident which took place on our line at this time. He suddenly, in the middle of the night, opened a very heavy trench mortar bombardment, and raided one of our posts. They fought most excellently, and it was not until the whole post, *i.e.*, eight of them, had been wounded, that

they succeeded, and were able to take away one of our men, who was wounded. On the other hand, we were able to take one of their men prisoner. It was unfortunate, however, that this man died within a few hours, because the identification had been particularly asked for by the Corps, and we had been straining every effort to get one for them. This is mentioned so as to show to what great use they put their trench mortars. During a space of about three-quarters of an hour they cut our wire in about twenty or thirty places, in addition to which they brought to bear a very heavy bombardment on the trenches and also on Company Headquarters.

Another thing which caused a great deal of speculation was that in the aeroplane photographs there had recently appeared a great number of little black dots. It was clear from the photographs that were subsequently taken that these were movable—in fact two of them had been seen going down one of their main roads. These dots, which appeared first of all in groups well behind their lines, were gradually moved up and took up positions just behind their trench system. There were, I believe, on our Army front no less than 750 of these. What they were has, I believe, not been cleared up to the present day. At first it was thought that they were small tanks, but the idea later was that they were small lorries, or something of that description, for carrying up ammunition. All these signs left no doubt in our minds that we were to be in for it very shortly.

The 20th of March had been fixed on as a likely day for the attack to take place, but this passed off quietly.

About March the 17th we came out of the line and went into the Corps reserve. For weeks past we had

been very busy, not only holding the line and digging for all we were worth, but also in practising counter-attacks all along our Division piece, and also that of the Division on our left, so as to be ready for the Boche should he penetrate our front line.

The subsequent proceedings are best dealt with by an account of what occurred, which I wrote just after we came out of the fight. We had then moved back—a sorely depleted Division—to a quiet little fishing village at the mouth of the Somme, called St. Valery, and the neighbourhood.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE GERMAN ATTACK.

*Extract from Diary :—*

## ST. VALERY-SUR-SOMME.

*1st April, 1918.*—We are now back at St. Valery-sur-Somme and, whilst all is more or less fresh in my memory, I propose to write an account of what we have been through during the last few days. Other people will doubtless have different versions about various incidents, but I can only write what I believe to be the facts.

To start with, we all knew perfectly well that the Boche was going to attack on our front ; we were under no false illusions on that point. It was even known that it would probably be early in the morning of the 21st, and that the attack would be preceded by a ten hours bombardment, of which the period from the sixth to the eighth hours would be gas shells. All our arrangements were made, and all that could be done had been done, and everyone had been warned.

Our Brigade at that time was out of the line, and was in Corps Reserve. The 19th Battalion K.L.R. were at Dury, where the Divisional Headquarters were. The 18th Battalion were at Aubigny, and the 17th Battalion at Villers-St. Cristophe, with Brigade Headquarters at the same place.

We had a capital Headquarters there, and were going to give a dinner party on the night of the 19th,

with "The Optimists" to follow, but, having been summoned to a conference at the last moment, we had to put it off till the next evening, intending to have a real good evening, even if the Boche attacked next day. So on the night of the 20th we had our dinner party, which I am sure none of us will ever forget. It was a most cheery evening, and all of us laughed a great deal, being under no false illusions as to what we were in for the next day, in all probability.

"The Optimists" were in their best form, and we kept it up till about 12 o'clock. The people who were there were Jelf, Laycock, Stanley-Clarke, my brother George, Campbell Watson, Rollo (who had just come back, having recovered from his wound), Shaw, of the 97th Field Ambulance, Groube, Mudford and myself. When we parted there had been no signs of a bombardment, and we had rather begun to think that the attack was not to take place that day.

At 4-30 a.m. I was sleeping very lightly, and heard a good deal of banging, so I was off downstairs like knife in very scanty attire, to the telephone. I rang up the Division and was answered by Brockholes, who said that the order to man battle stations had just come through. It was a pitch dark morning, and there was a thick mist. When it became light there was such a thick fog that one could not see twenty yards. We all got going pretty quick, leaving Oldfield to superintend the packing up, whilst we proceeded to Beauvois, which was our "Stand to" place. The 17th Battalion came there, too; the 18th went to Germaine, and the 19th to Vaux. All the battalions passed the starting point, if anything, a little before the appointed hour, and arrived at their destinations all right and up to

time. Just before we left Villers-St. Cristophe the Boche had started shelling the place, which was surrounded by artillery dumps, but he did us no harm. It was a most uncanny sight to see all these troops marching along in the thick fog the whole time, with a tremendous bombardment going on.

Soon after we got to Beauvois I sent up to Poyntz, who was commanding the 90th Brigade in Steavenson's absence. He was near Vaux, and was holding the left sector of our Divisional front. I asked him if there was any news and the answer came back (I think this would be somewhere about 10-30 a.m.) that up to that time no infantry attack had been made. Very soon after that, however, we got a message to say that the Boche had broken through the front system, that Manchester Hill and the Epine de Dallon were still holding out, but were surrounded, and that the Boche had broken into a small piece of the battle zone near Savy.

During the whole of the morning he had been putting a few shells into the Beauvois area, but as the day went on it became still more unpleasant, and he was putting them all round us. I told Campbell Watson to move his battalion up into a fighting position round the village, but outside it, and dig in. I likewise sent word to the other two battalions to do the same thing. We moved our Brigade Headquarters also out into the open field near Beauvois. It was very lucky that we moved the 17th Battalion, as only a few minutes after they had gone a big shell landed in a building where one of their companies had been, and they would undoubtedly have lost a lot of men.

The day went on, and one kept on hearing various rumours—none of them satisfactory ones. Nearly all

were to the effect that the Boche, under cover of the fog, had advanced in very great numbers, and was attacking the battle zone with a certain amount of success. Manchester Hill fell, so far as I can gather, about mid-day, but the Epine de Dallon, for which we had been responsible when we were in the line, held out at least till 2-30 in the afternoon.

The fighting was going on hard the whole day, but I had received no orders about moving, so I sent to the Division and told them about my dispositions. Our losses had been very slight up till dark. Shortly after dark I received orders that our Brigade, being in reserve, would be split up, and that I was to send the 17th Battalion to help the 61st Division, and that the 18th and 19th Battalions were to be handed over in support of the 90th and 21st Brigades respectively ; and that when this was done I was to bring my Headquarters back to Villers-St. Cristophe. We waited where we were until I heard that each of the battalions had arrived at their destination all right, and then withdrew to Villers-St. Cristophe, which we reached about 4 o'clock in the morning, and there we waited until it became light. Hearing nothing from the Division, who had in the meantime moved into Ham from Dury, I rang them up and asked if they had any orders for me, upon which I was told to come into Ham and bring my Headquarters, etc., with me. I arrived there at about 10 o'clock, I should imagine, and found the Corps Headquarters just clearing out. Soon after our arrival I was told that, being free, I was to undertake the defence of Ham. Certain troops had already been dug in. On my asking what troops would be available for the defence of the town, I was informed that the

only troops for this purpose were two entrenching battalions, two companies of special R.E. (the people who let off the gas), five platoons from the Corps of Reinforcements, and a Corps of Cyclists. To say the least of it, it was a mixed crew, and one would have liked to have had some of our own troops that we knew to undertake this most important task.

Well, Dennison (C.R.E.) and I rushed round in a motor, sited another trench to the south of the town, got some R.E.'s. to work on that, picked up Emery and my fellows who were at the Brigade School, and whom we could trust, and then placed all the available troops, with the Cyclist Corps, guarding the bridges, made all arrangements for blowing up the bridges, and in other ways made all preparations that were possible. But there was little more that could be done for the good reason that there was nobody to do it with, and no time to do it in.

The situation was decidedly not good—particularly as the Boche was attacking in great numbers. The morning of the 22nd was exactly the same as it had been on the 21st—very misty up till mid-day, after which it was very fine—absolutely ideal weather for the Boche, who could get up under cover of the mist, attack, and then find out exactly where he was when the fog cleared. He has indeed the luck of the devil. Our guns had the greatest difficulty in getting away. In fact, some had not been able to do so, because the Boche had simply advanced on them unseen, and had overwhelmed them. Our own Division, I believe, did very well in getting away their guns, and I hear that they had been complimented on having lost fewer than any other in the Corps.

But to come back to my story, the Divisional Headquarters had moved back to Ercheux, and I was left in charge of Ham with my mixed body of defenders. Late in the afternoon of the 22nd I was told I was to reform my Brigade and bring them back to Ham; in fact, that all our Division were to come back to Ham, and that I was to continue to hold the town with the 90th Brigade on my left, and the 21st on my right, and that the 20th Division would take up a defensive position north of the town, and would hold on there all night. Hardly an hour had passed after receiving this order when we were told that the 20th Division would not cover us, but would be withdrawn. So there we were, with the remains of our Division retiring through Ham dead beat, having been fighting hard for two days.

Since I had parted with my battalions they had all been flung into the fighting. The 19th Battalion had had a very bad time, and were much knocked about; the 17th Battalion had been marching about all over the place, and had had quite a lot of fighting to do, and the 18th Battalion had been counter-attacking as well. The result was that they were very much done, and the 19th Battalion were so knocked about that one could hardly count them. They had lost all their officers except one, and he was wounded. Poor fellow! he was killed the next day. The final straw was when I got the message to say that the Corps reinforcement men, the Special R.E.'s., and the Cyclists were to withdraw by Corps orders.

Brigade Headquarters moved out of Ham at 4-30 a.m. on the morning of the 23rd to Verlaines. A party of volunteers had been detailed to do street fighting in Ham, to harass the enemy in that way, and it is very

creditable to know that out of our remaining people who had been detailed to man the trench south of Ham, there were twenty-five of the Brigade band—everyone of those twenty-five volunteered to do the street fighting, which was a most dangerous undertaking. As was only to be imagined, with the length of front that we were holding—2,000 yards at least—on the north side of the Canal, the Boche crept along on either flank, and our line had to withdraw, fighting the whole way back, and must have inflicted pretty severe losses on the enemy.

Unfortunately an enormous quantity of stores of all descriptions had to be abandoned in Ham. There were five locomotives there with steam up, but no drivers, so one of the last of our fellows to pass there, being sure that there was no one looking after the engines, let off five rounds into the boilers of each, so that, at all events, the Boche should not get them intact, but the rest of the stores fell into their hands.

We then took up a position north of Verlaines, with the Bedfords and Scots Fusiliers close behind us acting in support. Brigade Headquarters moved back to Esmery Hallon, where I found the Headquarters of the 90th Brigade, and from that time on we worked together. The orders for our own people and for the 90th Brigade were to afford each other mutual support and that, if driven back, they were to take up successive positions. As the day wore on, I was of the opinion that we might recover some of our lost ground; so I told Campbell-Watson to counter-attack with the 17th Battalion on the south side of Ham. This he did, and pushed forward a considerable way, taking a machine gun en route—quite a successful little enterprise.

Well, there we were, fairly firmly established, but our left flank was none too secure, and as for our right, there was an awful gap between us and the next troops. We arranged with the 90th Brigade that they should form a defensive flank on that side. The night passed fairly quietly. We had then established our Headquarters on the bank of the Canal near Moyencourt. It froze hard, and I was only too thankful when morning came. At dawn it was reported that the Boche were advancing on our left, so Groube motor-cycled up to Verlaines and satisfied himself as to the position. In the meantime the enemy had got forward to Golancourt, and again both flanks were in the air, so it became necessary to fall back again, fighting step by step all the way. I am sorry to say that about now, owing to the hard fighting that they had had, and seeing that many of them had been without food for days, there were a considerable amount of stragglers, though I was delighted to see that there were practically none of our men amongst them. They were very good, poor lads, and they were simply beat from exhaustion.

We collected them all up behind the Canal, and arranged to feed them before sending them off to their various units. As soon as they had had some food and a bit of a rest they were as right as possible. We took up our position on the Canal Bank ; Poyntz with the 90th Brigade on the left, and we on the right, and were quite happy and comfortable, with our Headquarters rather in front of the front line, where we remained all day.

A very curious incident happened here. I was standing on the bridge with a lad in the 17th Battalion, called Harrop, so that we could see all the ground in

front right up to Esmery Hallon, and we saw a solitary figure come out and come towards us. There was no one else on the ground. We could not make out at this distance what he was. At first we thought he was an Englishman, a straggler, then we thought he was a Frenchman with a message. He was moving in rather a suspicious way, so Harrop said he would go out and see who he was. He took a rifle and a revolver with him, and went out about 500 yards in front of our bridge. Well, when he got near to the man I could see them manœuvring round each other; then there came a shot, and then several more. What had happened was that this was a Boche scout, and he had shot at Harrop with his revolver. Harrop then had a go with his rifle, but it missed fire, and this happened five times. In the meantime the Boche had had five shots and had missed every time, so Harrop got out his revolver and shot three times, with the same result. After these revolver shots from Harrop, the Boche threw down his revolver and put up his hands, and Harrop marched him in in triumph. It really was a thrilling thing to watch—quite an old-fashioned sort of duel between our lines, and any amount of fellows looking on. Besides getting a prisoner, Harrop got a very good revolver and a capital pair of field glasses.

Our Division were to hold from Buvenchy to Libermont, and it was decided that Poyntz took over from Buvenchy to the bridge at Ranecourt, and I took the other piece. We were all quite comfortably established, and it looked as if we could hold on there for a long time. The Boche had hardly attempted to get out of Esmery Hallon, except between there and Grecourt, where we could see some 250 of them digging them-

selves in. We turned the guns on them and made them feel a bit uncomfortable. During the day we were told that the French were going to counter-attack from the south of Hospital Farm, but so far as we could see nothing came of it. There was a certain amount of artillery work, but no infantry attack.

Fairly early in the afternoon a report came from Buvency and north of that, that the Boche was coming on in large numbers. I could see them from where I was on the bridge at Ranecourt. They were well dealt with, however, and all seemed to drift away into Houbleux and Grecourt, and none reached the canal. During this time he made it decidedly unpleasant for us with his artillery, and also with his low flying aeroplanes, but eventually things quietened down. It looked very much at one time as if Brigade Headquarters would be in the front line. During the day certain numbers of French had moved up and had taken up positions on the bridges across the canal, and we thought that at last we should be taken out and given a bit of a rest, and a chance of re-organising, but this was not to be yet. In the evening we got orders that the French would take over from La Noye Farm, just north of Ranecourt, down to Libermont.

The 90th Brigade were ordered to hold our Division front, and I was to have our lot east of Moyencourt, in close support to them. The French expressed themselves satisfied with their own dispositions, although they were holding it much weaker than we had been ; so, as soon as it was dusk, our people were withdrawn, and established themselves east of Moyencourt, whilst our Headquarters moved up to a position alongside Poyntz, about 1,000 yards west of Moyencourt. There we also found General Goodman.

The 21st Brigade had had a pretty good towelling, and there were no great numbers of them available for fighting. Such as there were, for that night were attached to the 90th Brigade and ourselves.

The night of the 24th-25th March passed quietly as regards the troops. We managed to get some hot food up to them and some rum, which was a most excellent thing, and worked wonders. I went up at about 3 o'clock in the morning, and found them digging themselves in, quite happy, but very tired.

The early morning of the 25th was very fairly quiet, but later we heard rumours that the people on our left were coming back, and then we heard that the Boche had broken through at Libermont. They were also pressing on in front of us, and causing a certain amount of trouble. Poyntz had asked me for some help, so I sent him up about 150 of the 18th Battalion. As the day went on it became more and more difficult for us, with both flanks exposed, and in the afternoon we were ordered to fall back, our retirement to be covered by the French, who had now taken over our piece from Buvenchy to Ranecourt. Our fellows only got away just in time. They had an awful job, because the Boche had got round completely on the Libermont side and was, in fact, well behind us. In several cases, particularly with the Bedfords, they had to swim for it. It was their only chance, but I am glad to say most of them got out all right, though at one time Poyntz and I really thought they wouldn't. We were ordered to fall back to Omencourt and Solente, and were told that, if possible, 'busses would be sent up to Omencourt for us, but that we must not count on them, and, if none were forthcoming, to march back to Roiglise. It was just as well

that the 'busses did not come up, as Omencourt was very heavily shelled, and we should not have been able to embus there. Poyntz and I waited till practically the whole lot had gone, and then we followed them back. All the fellows were splendid. They were dead tired, but their tails were not a bit down, and I think they were rather amused at having held up the Boche for so long and then having just got away.

On my way back I saw Oliver (Stanley) with his battery. He seemed very well and quite happy. I then went forward again, and by the time I came back he had gone, so he got his guns away all right, but from that time on they were covering the French, so I know no more of their movements.

It had been a very eventful day, and not the least eventful part of it was the walk back from Moyencourt to Omencourt and Solente. The Boche could plainly see us going back, and sniped with his guns, making things decidedly unpleasant—particularly south of Omencourt, where we had to draw rather into a neck. It was very sad having to leave all this part of the country, which one had seen under such very different circumstances when we came out of the line. At that time all the people were back, happily re-established, making sure that they would not be troubled any more. One has seen the saddest sights imaginable during the last few days; all these poor people having to fly and leave practically everything behind for the second time.

Well, we moved up to Roiglise, dumped ourselves down in a field, where all the men got hot food, which they sorely needed, and then, at about 9-30, we embussed—a very poor little party—for Plessiers, where it was understood that we should be rested. We

arrived there at about midnight on the night of the 25th-26th.

This was, to all intents and purposes, the end of our old friend, David. He had been sent up from the rear Headquarters to pick us up at the road near Solente, but unfortunately, on his way up there he broke down completely. However he and Walsh were never to be beaten, and were to be sportsmen for the rest of their time. So he was hitched on to a lorry which was taking up ammunition to one of the batteries which was in action at the time, and being pretty heavily shelled by the Boche. Nothing daunted, however, they were towed in, and waited until the ammunition had been unloaded, and then hitched on again, and dragged right away back to a place of rest. There he is now till the present day, and there he will remain until the happy time comes when the war is over and he can be resurrected. Such a faithful friend as he is can never be deserted.

After having seen the Brigade start off on their busses, Stanley-Clarke took me in a car to our new Headquarters. He thought it would be better to make a detour to avoid Roye, which was being made very unpleasant by shelling. So we went round—where, I have not the slightest idea, as I was asleep almost all the time. It was just as well that we did avoid Roye, as I believe it was taken about midnight. When we got in, all the men were extremely comfortable in billets, and we ourselves went to a charming chateau.

We fondly imagined that we should be there for at least a day or two, but no such luck. At an early hour in the morning of the 26th a message came that we were to move up again at once, and take up the line from Bouchoir to Rouvroy. Again only the 89th and

90th Brigades were functioning, and the remainder of the Yorkshires were attached to us. Fenn, who commanded the Pioneers (South Lancs.), came and said that he also was going to attach himself to us. We had a very hurried breakfast, and started off in a car, which the Division had sent for me, to go up and have a look at the line. I took up Groube, Campbell-Watson and Lawless, who was commanding the 18th Battalion, poor Villar having been killed during the early stages of this battle. Rollo had now rejoined his battalion, Biggs having been wounded. We got up to our line, and I met Poyntz there. We decided that he should take the Bouchoir piece, and go as far to his left as he could, and that I should take the rest, including Rovroy. It appeared to be a question of time, whether we should get there first or the Boche, and one can imagine that it was most anxious work waiting for our men to come up. The South Lancs. arrived first, and I sent them in front of Rovroy. Groube had gone on there, whilst I waited in front of La Folie. The 19th Battalion then arrived, and, thank Heaven! our line was established. The 17th Battalion were in support to the whole of my piece, whilst the 18th Battalion were to be used for counter-attacking, if necessary.

Our line was the old French system of the trenches of 1914, and everywhere seemed quite all right, except that Rovroy was in a bit of a salient. Whilst he was up there Groube had met a staff officer of the people who were on our left, and had arranged with him the boundary, but this was subsequently altered by them, and I had to send up two companies of the 17th Battalion (a total of about 100 men) to fill the gap.

By this time Steavenson had come back from leave, relieving Poyntz, who, poor fellow, was absolutely done, his health having unfortunately once more let him down. He had been absolutely splendid the whole time. Steavenson and I established our Headquarters alongside each other, having both selected the same spot, purely by chance. It was very curious how this was constantly occurring ; this was about the third or fourth time. It was the greatest advantage being in close touch with each other.

The Boche did not come on, though their patrols were seen out in front of us no great distance away. During the afternoon the Brigade of another Division was moved up to La Folie with orders to defend that. I protested, saying that there were too many men on the ground, and that they were unnecessary.

The night of the 26th-27th passed comparatively quietly. The Boche attempted a raid on our left, but was very severely dealt with, and beaten off. From all accounts there were about 100 of them, and they must have had very heavy casualties. On the days of the 26th and 27th we were totally uncovered by artillery—not a single gun behind us, as our artillery had been drawn off to cover the French.

On the 27th the Boche was decidedly active, and, as a result, we gave up the ground in front of Rouvroy, and the 90th Brigade gave up Bouchoir, and eventually we were established on a much better line altogether—west of Bouchoir and east of Warvillers. We got up another four machine guns, and altogether the situation was good. Colonel Rollo and Colonel Fenn were together, and very happy where they were.

That afternoon (27th) we were told we should be relieved by the French, and that two French officers would come up—one to the 89th and one to the 90th Brigade, for the purpose of taking over. We hung on, expecting them, till about 3 o'clock in the morning, but nobody came, either to us or to the 90th Brigade, so I telephoned to the Division, and told them nobody had arrived.

In the meantime some French had moved up to La Folie, but very few, and a French staff officer had gone to that Brigade of the other Division, and they had been relieved by this small number of French, and had gone back. It transpired afterwards that this lot was intended to relieve both us and the 90th Brigades as well. We represented that this would be holding the front very much weaker than we had been doing, but the French said that they did not intend to hold it as we did, and would take over the line and be responsible for it with the people that they had sent up, and they did not propose to send any more. This did not satisfy either Steavenson or myself, and we said we would not withdraw unless it was quite clear.

About 8 o'clock in the morning of the 28th I went up to the line with Emery to have a look round. We had got as far as Battalion Headquarters, when suddenly the Boche opened a really heavy straf. He fairly poured in stuff with his artillery, and it looked as if he was going to attack us. We made our way back to our Headquarters and found everything all right as regards ourselves. We were holding on to our piece, but the situation did not look very pleasant at Arvillers. This lasted about one and a half hours, when things more or less quieted down.

Shortly after this our G.S.O. (2) arrived with two French staff officers, who explained that they were going to take over the line, and appeared satisfied with it. Just at this time another bombardment took place, and then it became very serious. We were holding on all right, but were being heavily attacked all along the line, and not only could we see crowds of fellows coming away from Arvillers, but also on the left behind Warvillers. The French insisted that on the right it was simply the troops which had been relieved by them which were coming back. To make certain that everything was all right, and that we were in order in withdrawing our troops, we got a letter from the two French staff officers saying that they were quite satisfied with their dispositions, and asking us to withdraw as soon as possible. The order was then given for our fellows to come away. I took the precaution of sending over to the people on our left, telling them that if they saw any of our men coming away it was only because we had been relieved by the French, and it was not a withdrawal. The Boche had by this time got right around both our flanks, not slightly, but a long way, and much further than we had ever imagined.

On the north they had by this time got into Caix, and at the south they were in Hangest, so that we came away not a moment too soon; and had a pretty near shave for it. We then retired according to orders, through Mezieres to Moreuil, and so to Rouvrel—a very ticklish time it was, too. The Boche might have done us much more harm than he did ; in fact, he might quite easily have got the lot of us.

The men were grand—not a bit shaken, and the discipline was excellent. Steavenson and I remained at a

place on the road, near Le Quesnel, and they all passed there. We got them into little groups, and then passed them on in orderly formations, and before we left they had practically all come away. It was indeed a most interesting day, and I shall never forget it. The French had been forced to come away with our own people, so that there was nothing behind us at all. It was a most curious sight on the Amiens-Roye Road. There were all our fellows getting away, and then an absolute blank—not a soul in sight on the road. The Boche was very active with his machine guns, and acted as an excellent whipper-in. It was a sad sight seeing all the wounded men being helped along, but they were soon picked up by the Ambulance ; Shaw, of the 97th Field Ambulance, was quite excellent, bringing up the rear time after time with a motor ambulance, and picking up men.

The road from Mezieres to Moreuil, and afterwards, was a most awful block—transport of all descriptions and considerable amount of disorganisation, but none in our own men. There were innumerable peasants, wheeling barrow-loads of their goods—in fact the confusion was indescribable. In Moreuil there was only one narrow bridge by which one could pass the river, and if only the Boche had put one or two of his heavy guns on to that, the damage would have been awful. He was content to only fire a little into Mezieres, and that was all. We can reckon ourselves lucky to have got away as we did.

When we reached Moreuil we came upon Poyntz and Blore, our G.S.O. (1), and we watched all our men pass. Really considering how blocked the road was with transport, their march discipline was wonderful.

One would never have thought that they had been through eight days of fighting, ending up with a very stiff fight, and a long march on top of that. It was clear that they were very tired, but they were all smart, and there were no stragglers. I was not the only one who noticed it.

We went on then to Rouvrel, which was packed with people, added to hundreds of other civilians and troops. What remained of the 30th Division, exclusive of the artillery, were in there. Divisional Headquarters was at Estrees. We had a good night there. One was most awfully sorry for the poor civilians. The whole retirement was so totally unexpected by them. The old lady at our billet asked if it was advisable for her to clear off that night. It was bitterly cold and pouring with rain, so I told her it was not, but that she ought to be gone early the next morning, as there might be a certain amount of shelling. Before I was up she was off, leaving practically everything behind.

On the 29th there was a conference, and it was decided to amalgamate all the battalions in our Brigade into one Brigade Battalion, and that these three battalions would form one Brigade under Steavenson, as he was the senior Brigadier. The Composite Brigade was ordered at once to Mailly, but this was subsequently countermanded, and the Brigade was placed at the disposal of the French, with orders to be ready to move at an hour's notice. No orders to move were received on that day.

In the afternoon "The Optimists"—undefeated fellows—gave an outdoor concert in their ordinary, and very mud-stained, clothes. All their kit and "properties" had been lost and fallen into the hands of

the Boche at Esmery Hallon. The concert was a great success, both with our own men and also with the French troops, who poured into the village. In the middle of the concert the "Alerte" was sounded for the French, and off they went. All sorts of vague rumours were flying about, but one thing was certain, which was that the Boche had got into Braches.

We had a very busy day re-organising the one Brigade Battalion, which I had put under the command of Rollo, with Lawless as second-in-command, and by the middle of the afternoon everything was perfectly straight and in good order. We turned out a battalion of, roughly, 950 strong, including transport—a considerably stronger battalion than either of the two other Brigades, who could only muster about 600 each.

The next morning we got orders to march to Saleux and there to entrain for St. Valery, on the coast at the mouth of the Somme. This was a most difficult march, as the roads—or rather tracks—were very congested, and it was a regular scramble to get along, added to which it was beastly weather, raining hard all the time. The men were perfectly splendid, and there was no falling out. On our arrival at the station we found that the trains were not nearly sufficient, and we had to be packed like sardines. There were two trains, and I elected to go by the second, as all our people had not had time to get through for the first one. We left about 6 o'clock, and eventually reached St. Valery at midnight. Everyone dumped down in the station, and we did not move out to our billeting places until the next day.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

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**I BID FAREWELL TO THE BRIGADE.  
 TAKING OVER THE LINE IN FRONT  
 OF LANGHEMARCKE.**

Alas ! our Brigade was reduced to very small dimensions, but all that were left were in splendid form, and there was no question of our tails being down—the very reverse. If only we could be given the chance, we were only too anxious to get at the Boche again, and this time push him back. All our lads had fought magnificently, and on every occasion we, in company with the Bedfords and Scots Fusiliers, were the last to come away, and then only when both of our flanks had been turned. It was a terrible time, but none of us would have missed it for anything. We were very proud of ourselves, and knew that the old 89th Brigade had done splendidly, and that whatever happened the old spirit remained just the same.

I had barely finished writing my account of what had happened, when I received the tidings from the Divisional Commander that the Brigade, which I had had the honour of raising and commanding for three years and seven months, was to pass into other hands on his recommendation. My little farewell speech to the lads I loved so much best describes the situation.

*Farewell Speech by F.C.S. to the 89th Brigade, April 6th, 1918 :—*

“ After we come out of action, I always like to get the Brigade together at Church Parade service.

This has proved an excellent time for doing so, but I have another reason, and it is really the most painful task that I have had since I came to France, and since this Brigade was formed.

"The Divisional Commander has decided that he requires a younger man to command the Brigade. Unfortunately, it falls to my lot to go to the wall. Old age comes to us sometimes without our knowing it, and the time has come when I have to say good-bye to you—all of you.

"I cannot tell you how it hurts me. It fairly breaks my heart. We have been together now for three and a half years since the Brigade was formed, and of this two and a half years have been in this country.

"We have been through rather more than our fair share of hard fighting, and always, on every occasion, from first to last, from the time the Brigade was first formed, the Brigade has done as well as anybody else. We have more than taken our share of knocks, and given them back again, and always I have been proud of the way in which my lads have behaved.

"I think a great deal is due to the most extraordinary pride and spirit which started when you were formed.

"Although we have lost many since then, the spirit has carried on to the end, and it was never more plainly seen than during the last few days, and the 89th Brigade did as much harm to the Boche as they could before the flanks gave in.

"I don't think I have ever seen anything so fine as when we marched to Mezieres from Folies

and re-formed up as a Brigade. It was something grand. I cannot tell you how proud I was, and those who saw us pass said nothing could be finer than the spirit of the Brigade ; although the enemy forced us back and caused us to withdraw, but the spirit was there all the same.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently—all of you—Commanding Officers, Officers, N.C.O.'s, and men—for all that you have been during these years we have been together. It has been the proudest time of my life to be with you, and I shall always look back on it as the finest days of my soldiering.

"The only thing I can say is that the welfare of the Brigade has been my chief thought.

"I leave you now, and please do not think that you will ever be absent from my thoughts. I shall always look forward to seeing any of you at any time and place. Don't forget your old Commander."

*Colonel Rollo* :—"Eighty-ninth Brigade ; as one of the oldest Commanding Officers in the Brigade, I should like to express our great regret to General Stanley that he has to go to some more useful sphere of action.

"He takes with him great recollections of the happy days, and we thank him very much for the excellent way in which he has looked after us. The arrangements were entirely due to him, and I want him to know that we have a great affection for him, and that we shall never forget him.

"Three cheers for General Stanley."

*General Stanley* :—"Thank you very much indeed. What I feel is that I have done my duty and still retain your confidence, and that is the best thing in my life. Thank you very much."

It was a cruel blow, particularly as we all knew we had done really fine work during this retirement, and that no troops could have done better.

We went up on the 8th of April, and took over the line in front of Langemarck, next to the Belgians, and after being there for a few days I handed over command of a Brigade which was the happiest family in France.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

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THE LAST PHASE. COLONEL WATSON WOUNDED.  
HEAVY LOSSES. APPRECIATION BY LT.-GENERAL  
SIR A. J. GODLEY. BRIGADE FORMED INTO A  
COMPOSITE BATTALION UNDER COLONEL ROLLO.  
SOME OF THE FINEST FIGHTING DONE BY THE  
BRIGADE. THE LAST OF THE OLD BRIGADE.

The following account of the final days of the Brigade has been supplied by Colonel Rollo, D.S.O., who very kindly kept a diary of this period for me. As before mentioned, on the 7th of April the Brigade went into the line near Langemarck, with the 18th Battalion in the front line, the 17th Battalion in support, and the 19th Battalion in reserve. The time was fairly quiet there, but there was a certain amount of hostile artillery fire.

On the 13th of April the consolidation of the west bank of the Yser Canal was commenced, with a view to the possibility of a slight withdrawal. This was done on the 14th, and in front of this line there was a series of outposts.

On the 16th of April the 18th and 19th Battalion moved to the Westoutre-Mount Kokereele Road by 'bus, and these two battalions and the Brigade Headquarters were attached to the 34th Division. They were joined there on the 17th by the 17th Battalion. The hostile shelling there was very heavy, the back areas, villages, cross-roads, and likely places, receiving

considerable attention, but in spite of this casualties seem to have been pretty light.

On the night of the 17th, the 18th and 19th Battalions proceeded to the line in front of Bailleul, and on the 18th, the 17th Battalion took up position in the front line south-east of St. Jan Cappel. There was very considerable artillery action on both sides, but no infantry action developed during the day. The French had come up in considerable force, and were using their 75's very freely. The weather, which had up to that time been good, changed considerably, and there was a certain amount of hail and snow. From information gained, an attack was expected at 5 o'clock in the morning of the 19th, and Bailleul was heavily gas shelled by our artillery. The enemy put down a heavy barrage on the support line at about 4 o'clock. Our patrols were out, but failed to discover any enemy movement, and the day passed without any attack developing.

Bailleul was observed to be on fire. The patrols that were out during that time had a pretty rough time, and they lost two officers and six men wounded. All efforts to bring in these casualties proved futile, owing to the heavy enemy rifle and machine gun fire.

On the 20th of April the weather had much improved, and both aeroplane and artillery were very active on both sides. The French troops had continued to assemble in large numbers, and in the evening they relieved our three battalions.

Colonel Watson, whilst going round the front line with the French officers, was most unfortunately wounded in both legs by a shell, the result of which has been that he has lost one leg and the other is badly shattered.

He had been splendid all the way through, and was a great loss to his battalion. It really is wonderful how he has escaped so long, because he never spared himself in the least bit, and was always taking chances. When he was knocked out, Major Pitts, who had come from the Bedfords, and had been acting as second-in-command of the 17th, now assumed command.

On the 21st of April, when the Brigade moved out of the line, they proceeded to the Busseboom area, and on the 22nd re-joined the 30th Division, from whom they had been detached since the 16th. Amongst other losses which the Brigade suffered was that of Captain J. S. Edwards, who was severely wounded on the 22nd, and died of his wounds the next day. He was a great loss to the 18th Battalion, and the whole Brigade has lost in him a very fine officer. He came to the 18th Battalion with the men of the Lancashire Hussars, and stuck by them through thick and thin, and set a magnificent example.

On the 25th of April, at 3 o'clock in the morning, a warning order was received to be prepared to move at half an hour's notice, and all troops immediately stood to. The enemy had launched a strong assault in the neighbourhood of Kemmel, and it was reported in the afternoon that Kemmel Hill had been captured. Shortly after 2 p.m. the battalions moved up to positions of readiness south of Dickebusch. Enemy low-flying aeroplanes caused some casualties, and rendered movement difficult. In the evening the battalions moved back to neighbouring camps in the vicinity of Ouderdom, and again moved forward on the 26th of April at 4 a.m. They dug themselves in, but returned that night in order to obtain a bit of rest. However, this was to

be short-lived, because at 8-30 p.m. the 17th and 19th Battalions moved into the line in the Voormezeele area, in relief of the 39th Composite Brigade; whilst the 18th Battalion, on the 27th of April, relieved the Composite Battalion of the 21st Division near Ridge Wood.

On the 28th of April the enemy managed to pierce the front of the left of the 17th Battalion. A counter-attack, ordered to take place at 7-45 p.m., failed to materialise, owing to the enemy putting down a barrage at 7-43 p.m., the result being that the 17th Battalion had to form a defensive flank. On this day there was a very considerable movement noticed in front of the 18th and 19th Battalions. Some very useful sniping was done.

On the 29th of April, at 3 a.m., the enemy opened up a terrific barrage with all kinds of shell, including large quantities of gas, and at 6 a.m. he launched a powerful attack, smothering our outpost lines. The 17th Battalion was forced back to the G.H.Q. first line, and on the front of the 18th Battalion the enemy only succeeded in getting a footing in one of the posts. About twenty Boches got into the trench, but they were immediately dispersed, thanks to the energetic action of Company Sergeant-Major Sutton, who dashed in amongst them with some well-directed bombs. The enemy were entirely repulsed along the 19th Battalion front line. He again attacked at 8 a.m., and was entirely repulsed. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy all along the front, and he appeared to be badly disorganised by his failure, because during the day individuals were constantly trying to get away from broken camps and shelters to positions in the rear. Our men managed to get in some very good shooting, sniping all day.

Matters, however, had not gone any too well with the 17th Battalion. The enemy had got through on both flanks, and one company was completely surrounded. It had been a very tough fight indeed, and unfortunately we had lost some very good officers and men as a result ; but our lads had put up a magnificent resistance, and came in for high praise from Lieut.-General Sir A. J. Godley, commanding the XXII. Corps, who wrote as follows to the Headquarters of the 30th Division :—

" On the departure of your 21st and 89th Brigades from my command, I must write a line to tell you that they have done very fine service during the time that they have been with this Corps. The 21st Brigade was in the line a long time in Wyschæte Ridge, and took part in all the heavy fighting there. The 89th Brigade especially distinguished itself on April the 20th, the day of the big German attack, and the Commander of the 21st Division told me that it had fought magnificently. I shall be very glad if you will convey to the Brigadier, and to all ranks of his Brigade, my thanks and high appreciation of their service and of how they contributed to the successful holding of my Corps front."

General Godley also wrote the following letter to me :—

" A hurried line to tell you that your old Brigade, which is now under my command, fought quite magnificently last night, and David Campbell, to whose Division they are now attached, is reporting specially about it, and tells me they were splendid.

" They were in the line just west of Voormezeele, between Ridge Wood and Kruisstraathœk and the

Brasserie on the Vierstraat-Ypres Road. They were attacked by hordes of Boches, who advanced upon them in close formation with fixed bayonets, exactly in the same way as the Prussian Guards did upon the Guard's Division at the first battle of Ypres. The barrage was very heavy, too. Fellows who have been out here all through say it was the heaviest they have seen. But they stuck it most valiantly, slew vast numbers of Huns, and did not give a foot of ground.

"I know how glad you will be to hear this.

"Yours ever,

"ALEXANDER GODLEY."

He had plenty of experience of hard fighting, and such words as these from him afford very pleasant reading to all connected with the 89th Brigade.

On the night of the 1st of May the Brigade was relieved out of the line, and proceeded back to Scottish Camp, arriving there about 3-30 a.m. on the 2nd. This camp was no health resort, as there was a battery of 60-pounders in position in the middle of it, and they were the object of special hate from the Boche. Therefore our fellows came in for rather a rough time. In fact, so warm did it become that all battalions were instructed to withdraw to the St. Laurence Camp.

On the 2nd of May the Brigade was organised into one Composite Battalion, under the command of Colonel Rollo. Major Pitts was appointed second-in-command, and Major G. M. Clayton was the Adjutant. The total strength of the battalion amounted to about 27 officers and 750 other ranks.

The Composite Battalion remained in the St. Lawrence Camp until the 5th of May, when it took

up a position in Brigade reserve at the La Clytte-Hallebast Corner line.

The 6th and 7th of May passed comparatively quietly; the enemy was very free with artillery, but there was no infantry action.

On the 8th of May the enemy attacked the front line system, and forced back the front line troops to a depth of from 400 to 500 yards. It was not found practicable to immediately counter-attack, so one was organised for the evening. Our artillery was ordered to keep up a steady rate of fire on our original front line until 6-30 p.m. Between 6-30 p.m. and 7 p.m. the fire was gradually increased, and from 7 p.m. to 7-15 p.m. there was to be an intense bombardment, which was to lift at 7-25 on to our original S.O.S. lines. The French artillery was co-operating in support of their advancing troops.

It had not been intended that our Composite Battalion should take any immediate part in this counter-attack, but when the French troops started to advance, at 7-10 p.m., and no troops were observed advancing in conjunction with them, Colonel Rollo took it on himself to order two companies forward from the support line, with the object of co-operating with the French troops. But I cannot do better than quote from a letter which Colonel Rollo wrote me on the subject.

"Our last battle was really magnificent. The Boche had pushed back the other Brigade (Composite), and the French. The latter were to counter-attack in full daylight, with two battalions of the \_\_\_\_\_ Brigade. One of these was to go through my lines, but, somehow or other, it did not turn up. I had

a feeling that something was going to happen, so I told my two forward companies (Henry's and Williams') to be ready to assist with fire or men. When nobody came through us, as we expected they would, over they went and did the job, and then, when I had got another two companies sent me, I thickened their line up, and we nibbled next afternoon, taking an officer and some men prisoners, and a couple of machine guns.

"We made a new line, and were able to hand over that night a complete show, with touch everywhere.

"It really was a very pretty piece of work, most gallantly done with very tired troops, but showing extraordinary fine leadership on the part of the platoon commanders, who did the whole thing, including getting their men up to reinforce over 1,000 yards in daylight, in full view of the Boche on the ridge."

From the accounts that I have had of this fight, it must have been a magnificent show, and Colonel Rollo must be heartily congratulated on the way in which he dealt with such an exceptionally difficult situation, and the way in which officers and men fought must have been splendid.

Colonel Rollo ends his letter with the following words, which cannot fail to appeal to all those who have served in our old lot :—

"We are still the 89th Brigade, call us what they like, and put us in what Division they please. The old spirit remains the same as ever."

Right well did they deserve all the praise which they got on this occasion from all sides.

On the 10th of May, after a quiet day, the Battalion was relieved, and on the 11th proceeded back to Buyscheure.

On the 12th of May the Composite Battalion was once more split up, and all re-joined their own units. Information had been received that the Brigade would be disbanded—only a small staff being retained as instructors for training American troops for the line. The remainder of the battalions were sent to the base, whilst the training staffs proceeded to Woincourt, where they took up their new duties.

After the operations on the 8th and 9th of May the following message was received by Colonel Rollo, and circulated to all concerned :—

“ I wish to thank you, on behalf of myself and my battalion, for the help you gave us in the recent fighting. But for your battalions’ advance our right flank would have been hopelessly in the air. Later, the way your two battalions worked up in the daylight to fill a gap was admirable, and I was very glad to have them left to support my line after they were relieved. Their fighting, after such a long period in the line, was splendid.

“ Many thanks from us all.

“ Yours sincerely,

“ HUGH B. SPENS, Lieut.-Colonel,  
“ Commanding 5th Scottish Rifles.”

After the Composite Battalion came out of the line on the morning of the 11th of May, Major-General Pinney, commanding the 33rd Division, addressed the battalion, and congratulated all ranks on the magnificent work they had done in the counter-attack, and on the

way the line was held, although everyone was exhausted after such a long period in the line—practically from the 21st of March to that date without a real rest. Amongst other things, he said :—

“ The work done during the counter-attack was the finest bit of fighting I have seen in France.”

And so ends the history of the 89th Brigade.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

## CONCLUSION.

I have but a few words to add in conclusion of this record.

If I have hurt anyone's feelings by any reference to them, or not having mentioned them, I sincerely apologise. It has been impossible in these pages to give full credit to all those who deserved it, because to have done so would have been to swell to an enormous extent this already large book.

The best thing I can say is that, from start to finish, we were recognised on all sides as being a very happy family, which in itself proves that everyone worked well together.

From the very commencement it was the aim and object of all to do the utmost for the success of the four City Battalions and the 89th Brigade, which, later on, included our old and trusty friends, the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment; and, above all, to do our share in defeating the Germans.

There has always been a most healthy rivalry between battalions, but, when it came to the point, it was always the ambition of all to put the 89th Brigade at the top of the tree.

I would take this opportunity of tendering to all my most sincere thanks for their unfailing loyalty and support in all times, but more especially in the bad ones, when such support counted most.

The old spirit has remained with us throughout, and was as strong at the end as it was on the first day.

During our time abroad we have had many changes, both in the battalions and in the staff, but when new fellows took the place of the old ones, they became imbued with the same feeling that the 89th Brigade must be the best, and did everything in their power to achieve that object.

During our existence we have suffered many losses. Some, alas ! who have paid the full sacrifice and have laid down their lives for their country ; others who, from wounds or sickness, have been lost to us ; but all have, during their time, done everything, and more than everything, to keep up the noblest traditions of England and the English army. The relations of those who have fallen must cherish the knowledge that these gallant men have met a glorious death surrounded by their friends. Perhaps our Brigade has hung together during its existence more than all others. We were all Lancashire men, and very proud of the fact, but when it came to the time when we were joined by the Bedfords, we welcomed them as brothers, and I can confidently say they thoroughly reciprocated that feeling.

\*       \*       \*       \*

I cannot conclude without one more word of appreciation for all those ladies and gentlemen at home who have so incessantly slaved for our welfare and our comfort during these years. We have, all the way through, gloried in the knowledge that no other Brigade has been so well cared for and looked after. To these ladies and gentlemen I take it on myself, in the name of the 89th Brigade, to once again

tender to them our most grateful thanks for all they have undertaken for us, and for all the work they have so ungrudgingly done. Year in and year out they have been studying our interests, and it would be some satisfaction to them if they knew how many times they have been blessed by us all.

. They at home had the same feeling as we had in France—an unfailing sense of *esprit de corps* in the four City Battalions which Liverpool had so proudly sent out, and the 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment.

Even now, when the Brigade has ceased to exist, that spirit will not die, but we will hold together in years to come, and should the country once more need our services, it can always count on the old 89th Brigade.

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*APPENDIX I.*

List of honours and rewards gained in the 89th Brigade and by the 18th Battalion K.L.R. whilst serving in the 21st Brigade :—

## BRITISH.

C.M.G.	..	..	..	..	..	2
Bar to D.S.O.	..	..	..	..	..	3
D.S.O...	..	..	..	..	..	14
Two Bars to Military Cross				..	..	1
Bar to Military Cross				..	..	4
Military Cross	..	..	..	..	..	82
Promotion (to Major)	..	..	..	..	..	1
Brevets	..	..	..	..	..	2
Distinguished Conduct Medal				..	..	37
Bar to Military Medal	..	..	..	..	..	12
Military Medal	..	..	..	..	..	234
Meritorious Service Medal	..	..	..	..	..	12
Mentions	..	..	..	..	..	112

## FOREIGN ORDERS.

## FRENCH.

Commandeur Legion d'Honneur	..	..	1
Medalle Militaire	..	..	1
Croix de Guerre	..	..	5

## BELGIAN.

Chevalier de L'ordre de Leopold	..	..	1
Croix de Guerre	..	..	6

## RUSSIAN.

Order of St. George	..	..	..	1
Medal of St. George	..	..	..	1

## ITALIAN.

Bronze Medal	..	..	..	2
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*APPENDIX II.*

List of Officers who proceeded overseas with the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Battalions The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, November 7th, 1915:—

## 17TH BATTALION.

## HEADQUARTERS.

Lieut.-Colonel B. C. FAIRFAX, Commanding Officer.  
 Major G. ROLLO, Second-in-Command.  
 Lieut. C. A. EMERY, Adjutant.  
 2/Lieut. E. T. LEWIS, Machine Gun Officer.  
 2/Lieut. C. W. MARSHALL, Transport Officer.  
 Captain R. G. BEAZLEY, Signalling Officer.  
 Hon. Lieut. H. V. GOODMAN, Quartermaster.  
 Lieut. T. B. DAKIN (R.A.M.C.), Medical Officer.

## "A" COMPANY.

Captain G. F. HIGGINS.  
 2/Lieut. E. R. PORRITT.  
 2/Lieut. H. N. BRINSON.  
 2/Lieut. H. B. DAKIN.  
 2/Lieut. S. J. FARIS.

## "C" COMPANY.

Captain T. PRIESTLEY.  
 Lieut. E. W. WILLMER.  
 2/Lieut. A. ROBINSON.  
 2/Lieut. A. I. DRAPER.  
 2/Lieut. R. H. SMITH.

## "B" COMPANY.

Captain J. N. PECK.  
 Captain G. FRASER.  
 Lieut. B. S. THOMPSON.  
 Lieut. The Hon. C. C. S. RODNEY.  
 2/Lieut. H. A. DOD.  
 2/Lieut. F. Y. PEET.

## "D" COMPANY.

Captain B. STERN.  
 Captain H. H. ROBINSON.  
 Lieut. H. C. WAINWRIGHT.  
 2/Lieut. J. M. SPROAT.  
 2/Lieut. J. R. BLABEY.  
 2/Lieut. L. E. FAITHFULL.

Rev. A. S. ANDREW (C.F.), Chaplain.

## 18TH BATTALION.

## HEADQUARTERS.

Lieut.-Colonel E. H. TROTTER, Commanding Officer.  
 Major G. S. CLAYTON, Second-in-Command.  
 Lieut. G. M. CLAYTON, Adjutant.  
 Lieut. B. WITHY, Machine Gun Officer.  
 Lieut. H. WILLIAMS, Transport Officer.  
 Lieut. TORRANCE SMITH (R.A.M.C.), Medical Officer.  
 2/Lieut. E. STACEY, Signalling Officer.  
 Hon. Lieut. G. ALLISON, Quartermaster.

## No. 1 COMPANY.

Captain C. N. BROCKBANK.  
 Captain E. BEAZLEY.  
 Lieut. W. C. GLOVER.  
 2/Lieut. E. FITZ-BROWN.  
 2/Lieut. C. HIGSON.  
 2/Lieut. F. M. SHEARD.

## No. 3 COMPANY.

Captain A. de B. ADAM.  
 Captain G. RAVENSCROFT.  
 Lieut. H. C. WATKINS.  
 2/Lieut. C. ADAM.  
 2/Lieut. S. D. PEGRAM.

## No. 2 COMPANY.

Major R. K. CORNISH BOWDEN.  
 Captain B. M. JAVER.  
 Lieut. C. L. RAVENSCROFT.  
 2/Lieut. S. M. GRIFFIN.  
 2/Lieut. J. N. HIGSON.  
 2/Lieut. A. C. JUSUP.

## No. 4 COMPANY.

Captain K. B. STODDART.  
 Captain C. H. McDARMD.  
 2/Lieut. H. DODD.  
 2/Lieut. C. B. LEATHER.  
 2/Lieut. G. B. GOLDS.  
 2/Lieut. T. R. EDMONDSON.

## 19TH BATTALION.

## HEADQUARTERS.

Lieut.-Colonel L. S. DENHAM, Commanding Officer.  
 Major R. B. TRANT, Second-in-Command.  
 Captain W. FRASER, Adjutant.  
 Lieut. A. N. LANCASTER, Lewis Gun Officer.  
 Lieut. H. M. JONES, Signalling Officer.  
 Lieut. G. W. MASON, Transport Officer.  
 2/Lieut. R. W. VAUGHAN-ROBERTS, Bombing Officer.  
 Lieut. and Q.M. J. OSBORNE, Quartermaster.  
 Captain J. C. MATTHEWS (R.A.M.C.), Medical Officer.

## No. 1 COMPANY.

Captain A. L. DODD.  
 Captain J. L. BICKERSTETH.  
 Lieut. J. N. SERGIADES.  
 Lieut. N. RILEY.  
 2/Lieut. R. G. LLOYD.

## No. 3 COMPANY.

Captain H. A. SMITH.  
 Captain J. H. ROBERTS.  
 2/Lieut. H. Q. CARVER.  
 2/Lieut. R. S. COULDEN.  
 2/Lieut. G. W. SHARPLES.

## No. 2 COMPANY.

Major R. K. MORRISON.  
 Captain W. NICKSON.  
 Lieut. O. N. SQUAREY.  
 2/Lieut. H. SHARPLES.  
 2/Lieut. C. W. BIGGS.

## No. 4 COMPANY.

Captain H. T. WILLMER.  
 Captain W. WILLMER.  
 2/Lieut. W. ASHCROFT.  
 2/Lieut. H. L. SMITH.  
 2/Lieut. M. DODD.  
 2/Lieut. E. B. HOUGH.

## 20TH BATTALION.

Lieut.-Colonel H. W. COBHAM, Commanding Officer.

Major W. A. SMITH.

Major CAMPBELL WATSON.

Captain R. H. LAIRD.	Lieut. R. E. MELLY.
Captain P. D. HOLT.	Lieut. R. D. PATTERSON.
Captain T. WHITING.	2/Lieut. A. DAWSON.
Captain A. T. BEAZLEY.	2/Lieut. G. A. BRIGHOUSE.
Captain J. D. GREENSHIELDS.	2/Lieut. A. O. LAWRIE.
Captain W. L. HICKS.	2/Lieut. A. H. HOLDEN.
Captain G. C. ORFORD.	2/Lieut. W. H. JOWETT.
Lieut. & Adj't. H. BRACKEN.	2/Lieut. H. LANCASTER.
Lieut. & Q.M. A. C. DAWSON.	2/Lieut. S. GOOCH.
Lieut. A. MACKINTOSH, R.A.M.C.	2/Lieut. G. S. SUTTON.
Lieut. G. H. BRADSHAW.	2/Lieut. A. E. WILSON.
Lieut. R. MUNRO.	2/Lieut. J. W. MUSKER.
Lieut. A. B. GRANT.	2/Lieut. F. H. CRIME.

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